



# 2012 HOLIDAY SALES GUIDE

FOR PROGRESSIVE MUSIC RETAILERS

PAGE 47

OCTOBER 2012  
MUSICINCMAG.COM

# music inc



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TURNAROUNDS*  
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*A WALK  
THROUGH  
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Sami and Betti Lavi

Photo by Wendy Alas

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# PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

## A NICHE OF YOUR OWN

Niche retail is taking some new and unusual shapes. One of Chicago's brightest examples is a 200-square-foot room bursting with color. It's part of Midwest Pro Sound & Lighting, the DJ and audio specialty shop featured on this month's cover.

Inside the room, patrons can instantly preview more than 100 lighting effects in a club-like atmosphere. According to store employees, the room is the envy of competing dealers, who often stop by wondering how they can adopt the idea in their own showrooms. Most importantly, it has given the company a powerful niche in the hyper-competitive Chicago market. (The story begins on page 38.)

Midwest Pro Sound & Lighting isn't an isolated example. One side effect of the recession is an even stronger urge to niche among MI retailers, and now, many are cashing in. For evidence, look to the rise of instrument boutiques within traditional school music dealerships. A year ago, we reported on Florida Flutes, then a brand-new high-end flute boutique within Tamarac, Fla., retailer All County Music. Fast-forward 12 months, and Florida Flutes is a bustling business.

This month alone, we've spotlighted a handful of other retailers with compelling niches, both proven and brand-new. San Rafael, Calif.-based Bananas at Large, featured within our *Holiday Sales Guide*, has run a strong boutique guitar pedal business inside its combo shop for years.

Hello Music also recently launched the Dollar String Club. Participants in this subscription service get a new set of strings delivered monthly for as low as \$1. (Higher-quality sets cost \$9 a month.) Rick Camino, CEO of the Los Angeles e-tailer, said his company began offering the service because there had been "no streamlined way to purchase quality strings." How deceptively simple. (See page 14.)

Some featured music dealers trade on broader but equally compelling niches. This month's *Retail News* section features a visual tour of Artisan Guitars in Franklin, Tenn. (See page 12.) This shop has carved out a successful business by forgoing the largest acoustic guitar brands (i.e., Martin and Taylor) and focusing on high-end alternative lines, specifically Bourgeois, Collings, Huss & Dalton, National Reso-Phonic and Santa Cruz. To seal the deal, Artisan displays its wares in a pristine environment that's part rustic log cabin, part industrial showroom — practically a niche in and of itself.

Like many good ideas, the most striking thing about these niches is how obvious they seem in retrospect. It raises the question: What new niche business, large or small, can you make your own? Chances are, it's staring you in the face. **MI**



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# LETTERS

## Thanks From PMC

Thanks for the article “Drum Retail Events” in the September issue of *Music Inc.* We wanted to express our appreciation for your recognition of the Percussion Marketing Council (PMC).

This article will be included in the packets at our members meeting at The NAMM Show in Anaheim, Calif., this coming January, as well as in the media section of our NAMM Foundation year-end report.

Thank you for bringing awareness to this special educational activity that PMC provides. Regardless of how loud we might scream on our own, your coverage will be read and understood by each *Music Inc.* reader.

*Karl Dustman  
Co-Executive Director  
Percussion Marketing Council*

## Retailing at Its Best

While paging through *Music Inc.* recently, I noticed some photos covering two new Sam Ash store layouts in Las Vegas and Nashville, Tenn.

My reaction was: A face lift is good, but it's probably only a fresh coat of paint on top of the all too often malaise I encounter when visiting music stores.

I travel all over the globe and get to see lots of MI shops. In fact, I visited over 20 countries in the past 18 months.

I've had negative experiences, such as the time I visited a store in Kenosha, Wis., where the sales associate behind the counter was playing computer chess while I showed him a new product. Yes, this stuff really happens.

But recently, while visiting Los Angeles with Roc Bubel, our new sales manager, we dropped into the two Sam Ash locations on Sunset Boulevard. We were



absolutely blown away.

The new pro audio and DJ shop was incredibly well laid out. The staff greeted us immediately, and they were not only interested — they were knowledgeable.

The department manager used our gear, told us about recent sales and was quick to show us the display. I left the store thinking, “This new-store exuberance is so cool.”

We then went into the main store up the block and were greeted with a warm “hello” by the security guard. The staff there had the same incredible attitude in each department. The place looked great, and the employees were jazzed and excited to be there.

The guys we spoke with had good knowledge. The record-

ing department manager even showed us a new Radial product that just came out.

The e-mail trail from our team let him know the product had been shipped and included an in-store display, which he put together, and the educational data that he used to inform his staff.

All I can say is, “Wow!” I don't know what has happened at Sam Ash or if this is only a local phenomenon, but if this company can manage to morph this same visitor experience across the chain, they will have achieved a milestone in music store retailing.

My hats off to one of the most exhilarating store visits ever.

*Peter Janis  
President  
Radial Engineering,  
Tonebone & Primacoustic*

## Farewell to Two Longtime Reps

Dawn Colwell and Mike Summers were my KMCMusic-corp reps for years. They took good care of me as a customer.

Unfortunately, Colwell is no longer my rep, and Summers is no longer with company.

However, I want to thank them for their outstanding support through the years and would like to wish both of them the best of luck in their future endeavors.

I understand that businesses get bought and sold everyday. I think this is one thing that's killing our industry. It may not be long before there won't be any small stores or smaller distributors left.

Maybe that's the way of the future. Hopefully, this void will be filled by people like Colwell and Summers who care about their customers.

I have been in this business full time since 1986 in some capacity, from independent rep to store owner. I have seen plenty of changes, not all good. Happy selling!

*Rudy Abbott  
Capitol Music  
Montgomery, Ala.*

## Correction

In the September issue, *Music Inc.* incorrectly featured a photo of the Recording King USA Custom Shop banjo with a product description for a Recording King Madison banjo.

We regret the error.

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# RETAIL

ARTISAN GUITARS | BY ZACH PHILLIPS

## BRAND BUILDER

Few music stores pay homage to their brands like Artisan Guitars. The Franklin, Tenn., dealership represents five suppliers in its neo-pastoral showroom: Bourgeois, Collings, Huss & Dalton, National Reso-Phonic and Santa Cruz. (The company also dabbles in Composite Acoustics and Smith & Young.) And each brand gets the royal treatment, with dedicated departments, photo tributes and respectful displays.

“We like to think we have close to the largest collection on the planet for representation of those brands,” said Artisan Guitars founder Bill Warmouth.

Here’s a closer look at the shop and how it makes guitars shimmer like museum pieces.



**MALL  
STOREFRONT**

Artisan Guitars sits inside The Factory at Franklin. It’s a historic building outside Nashville that houses stores and restaurants. The high-end guitar dealership occupies two spaces totaling roughly 5,800 square feet. Despite Artisan’s luxurious showroom, roughly 40–50 percent of the company’s revenue comes from online sales, depending on the month.

### COMPLEMENTARY COLORS

Artisan’s color scheme revolves around different olive shades. Warmouth also gets custom Hatch show prints (think classic Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash concert posters) made up for store events and hangs them around the showroom as artwork afterwards.



### STORYTELLING

Digital picture frames visually tell each guitar manufacturer’s story using photos from the builder’s shop. “They’re constantly rotating — about every 20 seconds,” Warmouth said. “Each section has its own group of pictures dedicated to that builder.”





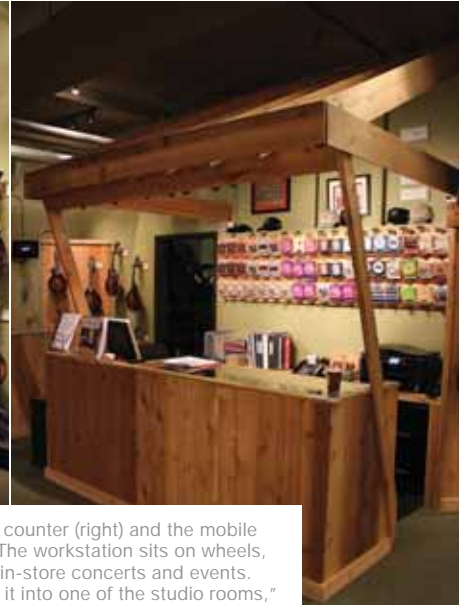
**RUSTIC LOOKS**



The showroom is decked out in \$15,000 worth of cedar paneling, according to Warmouth. He handled all the design and installation himself, even though he said he doesn't have a woodworking background. The self-made fixtures let Artisan store cases directly above their respective guitars. "They're all individually tagged with the brand, the model and the serial number, so it's easy to find the case," Warmouth said. Fifty-watt halogen lights hang from the ceiling, and 30-watt halogen bulbs illuminate the instruments.



**CHECKOUT**



Warmouth also built the main checkout counter (right) and the mobile workstation in the mandolin area (left). The workstation sits on wheels, so it can be moved into storage during in-store concerts and events. "We just unplug it from the wall and roll it into one of the studio rooms," he said.

**ISOLATED ELECTRICS**



Double-paned glass keeps amp noise from escaping Artisan's electric guitar room. "It is soundproof," Warmouth said. "For the most part, [a customer] can go in there and crank a tube amp on four or five, and you can still sit outside in the showroom and comfortably play an acoustic guitar."



## CLINICS



### MANGINI SHOWCASES CHOPS AT WEISS CLINIC

Steve Weiss Music of Willow Grove, Pa., hosted its inaugural drum set clinic on July 31. Held at Philly Sound Studios in Philadelphia, the sold-out event featured drummer Mike Mangini and a large selection of Pearl product for sale. The clinic filled the venue's 150-person capacity.

Pearl's Glen Caruba kicked off the event demoing his company's products. He was followed by Bob Sabellico, also with Pearl. Sabellico presented the company's ePro Live drum set and the Tru Trac pads, which Mangini uses on his touring kit.

Mangini took the stage afterwards and showed his fast chops and odd time signatures. During a Q&A, he also answered questions about his playing and his work with Dream Theater.

### HALPERN TO TOUR DRUM SHOPS

In September, Mapex MyDentity Custom Drums kicked off a nine-city drum shop tour with *Modern Drummer* Readers Poll winner Matt Halpern. He showcased his playing style, discussed his approach to playing complicated rhythms while keeping a groove and highlighted how to co-exist with bandmates on the road.

"We are thrilled that Matt is part of the Mapex family and he has chosen Mapex MyDentity Drums to play on the road and for these clinics," said a statement from Mapex Drums. "His distinctive style, coupled with his uncanny grasp of simple and complex rhythms, identifies him as one of the new, leading voices of the drumming world."

At press time, Halpern was scheduled to stop by Bentley's Drum Shop, Drum World, Donn Bennett Drum Studio, Hix Brothers, Vic's Drum Shop, The Music Store, Funky Munky Music, Willis Music and Dale's Drum Shop.



HELLO MUSIC | VENTURES

# DOLLAR STRING SUBSCRIPTIONS

Hello Music launched Dollar String Club in August. The subscription service delivers electric guitar strings directly to Hello Music members for as low as \$1 per month. Members pick their preferred string type from three options and receive strings automatically each month.

Dollar String Club offers an American-made option with three pricing and quality tiers. HM Select costs \$1 per month for a set of vintage-style, nickel-plated steel strings; HM Premiere costs \$7 per month for a set of cryogenically frozen strings for a longer lifespan, durability and

tone; and HM Platinum costs \$9 per month for strings with increased mass, tighter windings and longer life.

"As artist advocates, we're constantly thinking of new ways to save musicians even more time and money — and we realized there was no streamlined way to purchase quality strings," said Rick Camino, CEO of Hello Music, which is based in Los Angeles. "With our new monthly subscription service, everyone from weekend warriors to touring professionals can now get amazing strings at a very reasonable price, automatically reordered and delivered monthly."

ALLANS BILLY HYDE | FINANCIAL

## Australia's Allans Billy Hyde Placed Into Receivership

On Aug. 23, Australian Music Group Holdings, owner of Australian music retail chain Allans Billy Hyde, was placed into receivership by one of its largest creditors, London-based Revere Capital.

Revere Capital had given the dealership a cash injection earlier this year. According to ABC News in Australia, Australian Music Group Holdings owes unsecured creditors roughly \$13.5 million. At press time, Allans Billy Hyde was still operating, but receivers were looking into ways to restructure the company or sell some or all of its stores. The retailer will no longer honor gift vouchers.

Allans Music opened in the 1950s, and Billy Hyde's Music was founded in 1962. The companies merged in 2010. In 2011, Australian Music Group Holdings had more than 500 employees.



GUITAR CENTER | VENUES

# GC REACHES 234 RETAIL LOCATIONS

This past August, Guitar Center opened new retail locations in College Station, Texas, and Fayetteville, N.C., bringing the company's total number of stores to 234.

Both locations feature Guitar Center Studios, the company's in-house music lesson facility, and GC Garage, Guitar Center's on-site guitar repair service. Both locations also have GC's new multichannel "endless aisle," which includes the store's own inventory and access to \$400 million in new and used inventory from hundreds of GC stores and warehouses across the country.

The stores hosted grand-opening weekend celebrations, featuring savings, giveaways and free events. The College Station store, which opened Aug. 9, even held a workshop with Dave Elitch, drummer for The Mars Volta and Daughters of Mara, on Aug. 27 and will continue holding events through October.



The team at Guitar Center's new Fayetteville, N.C., store

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## TRIBUTE

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

### David Wood

David Wood, co-owner of Sheet Music Service in Portland, Ore., died Aug. 13 of natural causes, according to his family. He was 57.

A trumpet player, Wood handled instrumental music at the now-closed print music dealership. (His business partner, Michael Sagun, handled choral music.) Pender's Music purchased Sheet Music Service in 2005, and it closed for good in 2010. In total, the store operated for 93 years.

Wood's musical expertise let him expand Sheet Music Service's instrumental department into one of the largest on the West Coast. He helped form the Metropolitan Brass Co. and Pioneer Brass and also played with Big Horn Brass.

Wood's brother, John, told *The Oregonian* that customers would often come to David humming a few bars of a song.

"A large majority of the time, David would be able to immediately state the piece's name, composer and publisher," John said. "[He'd] always know if a piece was out of print."

"His gifts to the world of music education and performance are real and rich," Sagun told *The Oregonian*. "Those gifts will last forever."

### Gary Wallace

Gary Wallace, manager of Kennelly Keys Music and former manager of Nick Rail Music, passed away July 14. He was 59.

Wallace's first industry job was as an inside sales associate for St. Louis Music. He later worked at Mars Music and Sam Ash Music.

Wallace left Sam Ash in 2009 to manage Nick Rail Music's two San Diego locations. This past spring, he moved to Washington to be closer to his daughters and granddaughters and had just started with Kennelly Keys Music.

Wallace played trumpet in several pop, rock, funk and show bands. Nick Rail, owner of Nick Rail Music, also remembered Wallace as an "amazing vocal impersonator, especially well known for his likenesses of Rod Stewart and Prince."

He's survived by his wife, Tammy Robinson-Wallace. Cards can be sent to her at 23043 Ida Lane, Sedro Woolley, WA 98284.

## JACOBS MUSIC | AWARD

# Rinaldi Gets Top Steinway Honor

On Aug. 16, Al Rinaldi received a big surprise during Steinway's dealer meeting in Chicago.

The piano maker presented Rinaldi, chairman and CEO of Philadelphia-based Jacobs Music, with the coveted Steinway & Sons Lifetime Achievement Award.

"I sat there looking at images of a young boy on the screen as they described the reason behind presenting this award, and I was so impressed by their remarks, I never dreamt it was about me or that the photograph was mine as a child," Rinaldi said. "Every day of my life, I feel it is an honor and a privilege to represent Steinway & Sons and to serve some

of the world's most legendary artists. To receive this award means more to me than I can express in words. I will always be humbled by it."

"Al is an exemplary dealer," said Ron Losby, president of Steinway. "His company, Jacobs Music Co., has received many Steinway awards, including the prestigious Partners in Performance Sales Award at our two previous annual meetings. Al is the magnetic force behind their organization, and considering the challenges he has faced throughout his life, his success is that much more remarkable."

The Rinaldi family runs Jacobs Music, a 112-year-old piano dealership.

## GUITAR STOP | ANNIVERSARY

# GUITAR STOP TURNS 50

Guitar Stop of Cambridge, Mass., celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

During September, the company is giving away three instruments: a Fender Stratocaster, Takamine acoustic-electric guitar and Cordoba ukulele. Winners will be chosen on Sept. 30. Guitar Stop will also be donating to the Cambridge Community Foundation to support local music education.

Edward Oster founded Guitar Stop in 1962 as Central Sales Co. It's now owned by his daughter, Jeanne. The company changed its name to Guitar Stop in 1998 to better reflect its focus.

"For three generations, we've strived to be a full-service neighbor-

hood music store, selling guitars, accessories, and offering lessons and repairs," Jeanne said. "Since opening in 1962, we've helped many people pick out their first guitars. It's great to still be here, helping their children pick out their instruments and learn to play."



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## Note from Joe

### Your Company's Elevator Speech

Can you describe why your business is unique in 30 seconds or less?

There's an old story from the Jack Welch days at General Electric that has stayed with me. As Jack visited GE's many branches around the world,

his employees were often given the opportunity—sometimes in an elevator—to briefly describe what they did for the company and why it mattered. It's been said that careers could be made or lost in those 30-second "elevator ride" conversations.

Whenever my staff and I visit with NAMM Members, meet with our partners in music education or speak with important decisionmakers on Capitol Hill, we're often faced with a similar challenge: How do we quickly describe the year-long activities of our global trade association? Fortunately, NAMM's Circle of Benefits business model has really helped us to communicate, in a fast and easy way, how the association works and why it matters.

Our 30-second elevator speech goes like this...

NAMM produces trade shows (the best in the world in my opinion!) and reinvests the proceeds back into the industry to support its Members with professional development training, government lobbying, research and statistics, and the relentless promotion of music and music education to the general public. These efforts help keep music "top of mind" with consumers and increase support for music education in our schools, which in turn drives consumer spending on music and sound products, enabling NAMM Member companies to serve this expanding market and grow their businesses as well. As a result, manufacturing companies continue to innovate and bring new products for retailers to see at the NAMM Show and the circle repeats, as it has for 112 years.

So much has changed since the association's founding in 1901: instrument categories have come and gone, as have iconic companies, and changes in musical trends continue to confound each successive generation of parents. What hasn't changed is NAMM's business model. And through recessions, depressions, world wars and technological revolutions, this cycle of industry reinvestment has been a critical component of growth and stability. This business model has served many generations of Members, and with your continued support and guidance, NAMM will continue to do so for future generations.

So what's *your* company's elevator speech? I believe one of the keys to success is to be able to effectively communicate what you do (or what you don't do) succinctly and why it matters, enabling your customers to know exactly what to expect when doing business with you. In a competitive world, it's this kind of clarity and focus that will help a company to stand the test of time.

**Joe Lamond**  
NAMM PRESIDENT AND CEO



NAME NAMM News October 2012

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# SUPPLY

CARL FISCHER | BY KATIE KAILUS

## STILL GOING STRONG

This year, Carl Fischer celebrates its 140th year in business. It's an achievement in any field — and especially in the ever-changing print music industry.

"Any time a company can hit a milestone such as 140 years, it's a proud accomplishment," said Chris Scialfa, senior vice president of sales for the print music publisher. "We're all excited to be a part of that."

Carl Fischer was founded in 1872 when its founder and namesake opened a musical instrument repair shop in New York. While speaking with his customers, Fischer noticed a demand for instrumental arrangements. He soon began reproducing the arrangements, which eventually led him into the publishing business.

Today, Carl Fischer remains a family owned business serving more than 1,400 retailers worldwide and producing several well-known series, most notably *I Used To Play* and *Progressive Duets*.

### STAYING POWER

Company CEO Sonya Kim pointed out that in order to last 140 years, Carl Fischer has had to adapt to the times.

"Technology has made many



Chris Scialfa and Sonya Kim

### Carl Fischer turns 140 and focuses on adapting to the changing print industry

advances that have altered the print music industry in several ways," she said. "Carl Fischer is adapting quickly to take advantage of these changes. Our online perusal scores make it

possible for performing organizations to browse our performance music catalog at their convenience."

Kim also noted that improvements in printing technology let Carl Fischer deepen its catalog by bringing back titles that were previously out of print.

"Titles that may have once been sadly forgotten are now finding new avenues for performance," she said.

Scialfa added that the company can also attribute some of its staying power to knowing its

strengths and sticking to them.

"We have one of the most well-respected brass and string catalogs," he said. "So, although through the years we've dabbled in areas outside of that, we've never lost focus and always continued to publish material that fits well with our classic brass and string publications."

### THE NEXT 140

To celebrate its milestone, Carl Fischer will launch a customer-appreciation special at the end of the year.

And to ensure another 140 years of publishing, Kim stressed that the company will continue to set standards for print music publishing, as well as change with the times.

"This will require us to embrace technology and take advantage of its speed and reach [in order to] connect with budding musicians who are eager to learn how to make music," she said.

Scialfa agreed that technology may alter the way print publishers deliver content, but he stressed that the content itself won't be altered.

"We'd like to think that the high quality of our content will remain until the next big anniversary and beyond." **MI**



NAMM | EVENTS

## NAMM Unites Artists, Leaders

NAMM co-hosted arts events at the 2012 national political conventions in partnership with Americans for the Arts, The Recording Academy, The United States Conference of Mayors and the local arts councils. The events, which included a policy conversation and a concert, were designed to highlight the role of arts and arts education in public policy as the major political parties lay out their visions for the future.

An afternoon session called ARTSSpeak brought artists and elected officials together for a conversation about the role of arts and music education in the United States. Attendees were invited to celebrate the arts with ARTSJAM, a concert featuring performances by Amaury Gutiérrez at the Republican National Convention and Bernie Williams at the Democratic National Convention. **{namm.org}**

VENUES

### Peavey Opens Center in Tinseltown

Peavey Electronics opened a West Coast factory showroom, artist relations headquarters and multimedia dealer education center on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood, Calif., on Sept. 1. Peavey Hollywood gives musicians, audio pros, systems integrators and music retailers a 360-degree view of the company's products, artists and philosophy. The new showroom will feature products from Peavey's affiliated brands.

"Peavey has a rich and exciting legacy in music and audio, and proactive outreach has been key to our success since Hartley Peavey founded the company in 1965," said Courtland Gray, COO of Peavey. "With so many artists living in L.A. or passing through on a daily basis, Peavey Hollywood's location at the heart of 'guitar row' on the Sunset Strip gives us access to artists and marketing opportunities that will serve Peavey retailers and musicians around the world." **{peavey.com}**

YAMAHA | PARTNERSHIP

## YAMAHA PARTNERS WITH DELOITTE

Yamaha has partnered with Deloitte Consulting, which has designed a plan to enhance Yamaha's salesforce.com cloud-based customer relationship management (CRM) apps — Salesforce Sales Cloud and Service Cloud. "We were able to streamline what the customer support agents did, how they interfaced

with the customers and how they interfaced with Salesforce," said Tom Sumner, senior vice president of Yamaha. "We need to be flexible enough to connect with people in the ways they want to communicate. Deloitte Consulting and salesforce.com helped us develop the ability to be flexible." **{yamaha.com}**



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NEO-NEON LIGHTING | BY HILARY BROWN

# MILE-HIGH LAUNCHPAD

After adding LED vendor American Lighting and its exclusive DJ lighting brand Irradiant to its roster of affiliates early this year, China-based manufacturer Neo-Neon needed a place to invest its energy stateside. That place turned out to be Denver, home of American Lighting's new-and-improved U.S. distribution headquarters.

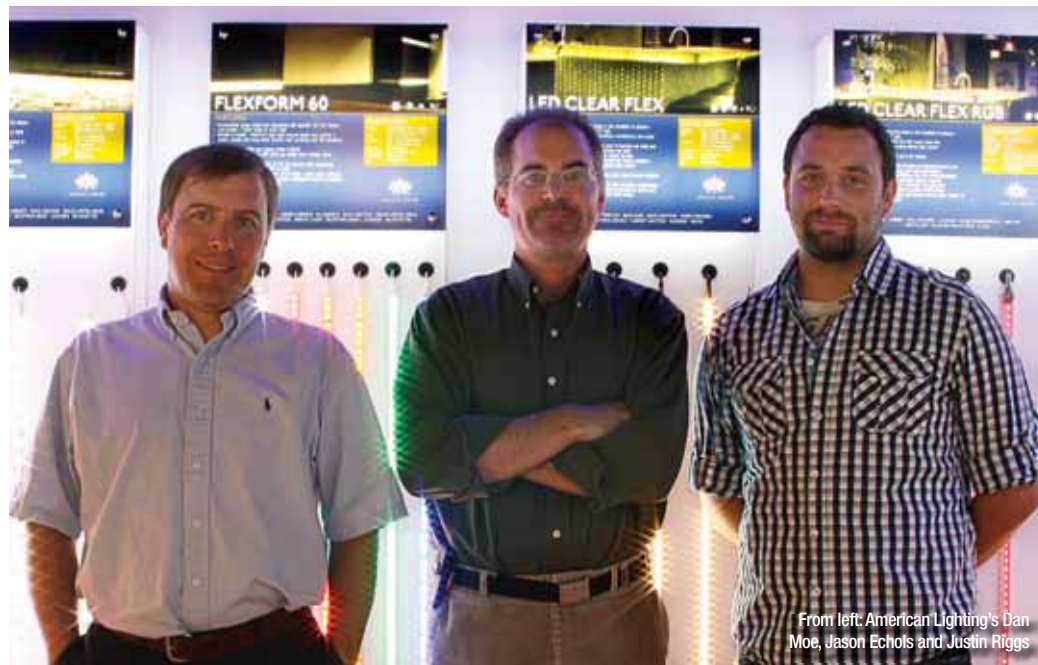
Jason Echols, director of sales and entertainment lighting at American Lighting, said the Mile-High relocation from the company's previous headquarters in Chino, Calif., will reduce overhead costs and also provide the ideal "landing pad" to merge divisions of Irradiant and American Lighting.

"The Denver move was inevitable once [Neo-Neon] acquired American Lighting," Echols said. "It allowed us to absorb our California business into the larger American Lighting operation."

Neo-Neon now plans to combine American Lighting's amusement, sign and game division with the Irradiant line of DJ and club effects under the umbrella of entertainment lighting.

By doing so, the company's brand managers will broaden their product range to include linear product sold by the spool, such as tapelight, ropelight, and flexible neon and wall washers. The managers will also be able to expand their target dealer base and pique the interest of more mom-and-pop shops.

"We're looking to focus on selling to more independent retailers — locally owned sign and music shops," Echols said.



From left: American Lighting's Dan Moe, Jason Echols and Justin Riggs

"Our end-users include casinos, hotels, churches, theaters, production and rental companies, and DJs."

#### CATERING TO BRICK & MORTARS

The company's Neo series will play a big role in Neo-Neon's indie-retail campaign. This new, competitively priced pro lighting range features high-power LED light engines, updated battery and wireless technology, and Irradiant's recently revamped linear products coupled with DJ- and club owner-friendly DMX control.

By debuting this indie retailer-focused line at lighting exhibitions and establishing a network of exclusive dealers, Echols said he's confident that the Neo series will be a sure-fire profit-maker.

"[Neo] is a factory-branded product line that will be consistent across all our markets in Europe, Asia, South America

and the U.S.," he said, adding that Neo is the ideal link to solidify Irradiant and American Lighting's wide-ranging product offerings.

Newly appointed Neo-Neon Entertainment CEO Jeremy Mair, who's spearheading product development in the United States, will also help Echols solidify a global dealer network.

"Jeremy and I will be working with the country managers in each territory to make sure we're on the right global product-development track," Echols said. "We're supporting the product at a level demanded by pro customers, and we're bringing the product to market in a way to maximize profits for our dealers."

#### CEO REFRESHER

A seasoned lighting industry vet based in Hong Kong, Mair will instill a greater Ameri-

can presence and still maintain the company's strong bonds to its Chinese production plant. So, while his company's American arm is in Denver, the Asia-based CEO can take his knowledge straight to the factory.

This hands-on approach, in which Neo-Neon employees interact regularly with workers on the factory floor, helps guarantee consistent product despite the distance.

"When our customers talk with us, they know they're talking with American managers who have direct lines to the production floor," Echols said.

But as the company further aligns its products with Mair's vision, Echols said it's also essential to obtain retailer feedback.

"We're mostly interested in spending time talking with our dealers in the U.S. and adapting our products according to their input." **MI**



AMERICAN DJ | OPENING

# ADJ OPENS UP

Approximately 300 DJs, lighting professionals, club owners and dealers visited the American DJ Group's world headquarters in Los Angeles on July 18 to tour the new showroom and view some of the latest products.

The new 4,000-square-foot state-of-the-art showroom, which is shared with sister company Elation Professional, features a replica nightclub, production stage and other realistic venues. American DJ lights are showcased in realistic settings, often as part of choreographed light shows.

"We're excited about our new showroom because it gives our friends and customers an opportunity to see how our products work together in a real world setting," said Alfred Gonzales, national sales manager of American DJ. "We're also excited about using the showroom as an educational resource where our dealers can send their staff for training." [americandj.com](http://americandj.com)



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SHURE | AWARD

# Shure Wins Best & Brightest

For the fifth time, Shure has been named one of Chicago's 101 Best and Brightest Companies to Work For by the National Association for Business Resources (NABR). The award was established to honor companies that recognize associates as their greatest asset.

The only audio company to be honored on the list, Shure was selected because of its commitment to excellence with human resources practices and employee enrichment programs. The company won the same title in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2011.

"Sidney N. Shure often said he was building an organization of people, not an organization that built products," said Sandy LaMantia, president and CEO of Shure. "Thanks to his philosophy, our company has dedicated and creative associates across the globe. Today, we are celebrating an award that honors companies that recognize employees as their greatest asset." [shure.com](http://shure.com)




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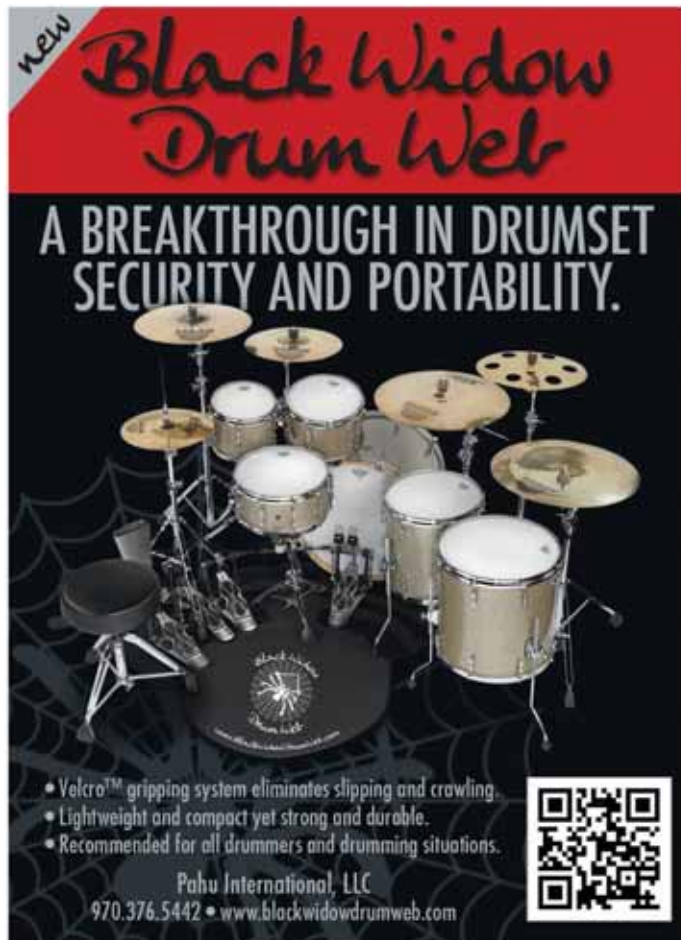
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## APPOINTMENTS

### Phillips Named NAMM Director of Professional Development

Zach Phillips, editor of *Music Inc.* and *UpBeat Daily* magazines, has left his post to join NAMM as director of professional development.



Zach Phillips

“It’s terrific for the industry that Zach will be taking that mindset and experience to NAMM,” said Kevin Maher, president of *Music Inc.* and *UpBeat Daily*.

In his new position, Phillips will spearhead NAMM University and all professional development opportunities for NAMM members.

“NAMM University has become a vital part of our members’ success,” said Joe Lamond, president and CEO of NAMM. “We look forward to the ideas and energy that Zach will bring as we seek continual improvement in the years ahead.”

**Martin Audio** has appointed Sam Spennacchio as eastern regional sales manager for North America.

**Conn-Selmer** has hired Branislav Zivkovic as the new vice president of Ludwig & Musser.



Branislav Zivkovic

**Chauvet** recently promoted Ana Jaramillo to national sales manager.

**Ultimate Support** has named Preston Clark vice president of sales.

Derek Wolfford has been promoted to marketing manager of integrated media for **Pearl**.

**Harman’s Studer** recently appointed Rob Hughes to the position of market sales manager.

**Rodgers Instruments** has hired Diane Snyder as controller.

**Fender** has named Chris Midgough, David Gonzalez and Jason Barnes as the new product managers for the Guild, Takamine and Ovation Guitars brands, respectively.

## TRIBUTE

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

### Jack Westheimer

Jack Westheimer passed away on Aug. 13. He was 82.

Westheimer founded Cort Guitars in the 1960s and had a hand in many other brands, including Teisco, Cortez, Sil-

vertone, Kingston and Pearl.

“He was one of the nicest guys in the industry,” said Marc Harris, owner of Harris Musical Products. “He always supported us, even though in some sense we might have been in competition.”



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# IDEAS

Inside **IDEAS** > The Customer Whisperer Page 28 > Economic Rhythms Page 30 > Lessons Learned Page 32 > From the Trenches Page 34

INDEPENDENT RETAIL | BY TED ESCHLIMAN

## SMASH & GRAB RETAIL

We are blessed with a plethora of great resources for training salespeople. The canon of tools describes greeting, qualifying, FAB (feature, advantage, benefit), closing, overcoming objections — all components in our quest to capture the flag, revel in conquest, listen to the cash register go *ka-ching!* Those terms were important during my own three decades of selling, and I argue they remain imperative for employees to understand and, at minimum, be able to diagram in their heads.

The words aren't just about the triumph of the sale either. They also chart the basic skeleton of effective and efficient communication between salespeople and customers. One could argue that in today's 140-character-limit tweeting world, we are facing a new generation of employees lacking basic social-interacton skills. It would be a shame to see these techniques become a lost art.

Conversely, today's retail has evolved. Outside of the piano showroom and high-end boutique specialty shops,



independent music retailers are seldom afforded the opportunity to “interview” customers, let alone educate them. Customers enter the store informed (and often misinformed) of the products they want, and the opportunity to probe, qualify, solve and cross-examine has become a luxury on many contemporary showroom floors. It doesn't help that alternative industries are legendary for abusing these tactics. (Getting called a “used car salesman” is rarely a compliment.)

Then there's the time factor. Today's busy, microwave-reared consumer wants commodities and consumables like its food

— fast and served sanitized in a wrapper. They invade our showrooms with hyper-vigilance, expecting a quick exit and honest but concise answers to questions.

We also compete with retail models based on dumbed-down service. Sophisticated signage, brightly colored boxes and self-service — it's the way many people want to buy from us now. “Point me in the right direction, but for heaven's sake, don't try to sell me something along the way.”

All is not lost, though. Independent retailers can still be successful in this smash-and-grab retail environment. It only requires knowledge of a few fundamental tactics.

**Acknowledge the customer.** With shrinking margins, we can't afford to staff the way we used to. We have fewer employees waiting on more customers, and that means long lines and multitasking employees if you're fortunate enough to have a busy store. The most important thing to teach staff is how to make a roomful of customers feel attended to, even when they aren't. People in line are much more inclined to wait patiently knowing their rightful place, and a

friendly nod or smile goes miles toward making that wait tolerable. Whatever it takes, convey visually that you know they're waiting, their turn is coming, and you're happy they came in.

**Balance needs.** Be on the lookout for customers who need to get out the door quickly and customers who actually want to spend time with you. Offering literature to read (translation: stall) or pointing at more curiosities in the store can buy you time while you're finishing up with other clients.

**Use science.** This is where old-school selling comes in. You may not have time to qualify, close and smash objections, but the principles are still there in the communication. Get to the heart of what customers need early, and you save them time.

Today's sales floor can be like a hospital emergency room, and we want to be wired to stop the bleeding and keep patients alive. Failure to do so sends them home with a stronger instinct to cyber shop and ultimately deny us their business for good. **MI**

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

THE CUSTOMER WHISPERER | BY GREG BILLINGS

# Turnaround Basics

Many remember my dad's successes as a retailer and publisher. But as with most creative people, he had some very difficult times in between his triumphs. And when his back was up against the wall, Dad was at his best.

Myrna Sislen's recent column about turning her business around (July 2012) got me thinking about Dad. One of his key strategies, usually imposed by a bank, was to hire a tough financial professional, a "turnaround" guy. And Tad Wegmann was my favorite of them all.



In 1970, Keith Mardak and Art Jenson left Dad's publishing business to join Hal Leonard, leaving a big hole in a small company. Within a few years, we had serious problems. That's when Dad hired Tad. He was a 36-year-old Nixon Republican with a butch haircut. I was a 22-year-old pseudo hippie with a red beard and hair to my shoulders.

Tad's approach wasn't magic. He identified our most profitable products and most productive people and got the rest out of the way. He spent a lot of time outside of his office. He listened to everyone, found out what they needed to do their jobs and got it for them. He kept the bankers at bay and said "no" to Dad a lot. Tad made all of us write our own job descriptions and made every department manager write his or her own budget and business plan.

The best thing about Tad was he didn't care if I was the boss' son. He treated me the same as everyone else and became my first mentor. And what I learned from him was pretty basic: Write a reasonable plan, including a budget; measure performance against the plan; and make prudent adjustments along the way.

Shortly after, I started my own retail organ business, just as the organ market began to collapse. It was my turn to hire a turnaround guy, but I couldn't afford one. So like Myrna, I became my own.

## DAMAGE CONTROL

We had to reduce expenses and increase sales. We had to get out of the organ business and into the piano business.

Writing the plan was the easy part. Implementing it was the hard part. And the hardest part of my first turnaround plan was closing the mall stores and firing the entire sales staff.

The salesmen had occupied their own "closing" rooms along the side walls, and there was a big reception desk in the center of the store. My office was in back. Since there was no longer a receptionist or any salespeople, we turned the closing rooms into teaching studios, and I moved to the middle desk. Little thought went into it. Somebody had to sit at that desk, so it was me.

That move changed everything. Suddenly, I was saying "hi" to every student who came into the store and chatting with every parent. I also greeted every customer and took care of most of them. The plan worked, and we have had an annual business plan ever since.

A few years later, I hired a salesman named Steve Datz. He was trained to sit at the center desk when I had a customer, so he heard every word we exchanged. I also heard every word between him and his customers. We shouldn't have been surprised to learn that people did a better job when they knew someone was listening. It wasn't our intention — it was a result of logistics.

The store was later sold to my biggest competitor, Netzow's

**Why moving my desk to the middle of the store changed everything**



Pianos, and we went to work for the company. Right away, we realized Netzow's needed a turnaround guy. We kept the center desk and dragged the store into the 1980s. Today, Steve owns Netzow's, and it's the largest piano dealer in Milwaukee.

**HISTORY REPEATED**

When my contract with Netzow's expired, I bought back half interest in the store Dad had sold to his employees and became partners with Myron Brandt, Dad's last turnaround guy during his retail days. There, I found another company in need of a turnaround. The business had not made the transition from selling organs to selling pianos smoothly, and the sales staff was out of control, cloistered in their closing-room offices. Water-

cooler gossip centered around whose office the new partner was going to commandeer.

Instead, we found an unused desk in the warehouse and moved to the center of the store. A shocked saleswoman said, "You can't put our desk in the middle of the store. You will hear every word we say." She was right. She left of her own accord a few weeks later, followed by another old-timer.

We replaced the departed with trainable, motivated young people. One of them, David Hall, became a music store website specialist. Another, Jill Deschaine, has had a long, successful tenure at Hal Leonard. Myron and I had nine profitable years until he retired and I moved to Florida to open the Steinway Piano Gallery.

**THE LATEST TURNAROUND**

Things were good in Southwest Florida until we became ground zero for the housing meltdown. Once again, we needed to cut expenses, cut staff and increase sales. And once again, I needed to move my desk from a nice office in back to the center of the store. Our new plan also called for LED lighting and a change from media-based advertising to online marketing.

Immediately, things improved. We had big increases in 2010 and 2011, and we're up about 15 percent for the current year. I'm greeting and serving most of the customers and hear every word that's uttered. A higher percentage of prospects become customers, and there are fewer problems. Somehow, I still manage to get my desk work done.

Over the past 45 years, I've been blessed with remarkable opportunities and great mentors and have met many wonderful and talented people. But every business is cyclical, and all of us eventually find ourselves up against the wall and forced to make hard decisions. Maybe the difference between success and failure isn't just perseverance. It's perseverance with a plan.

So here's my recipe for a successful turnaround: Write a business plan and stick to it; relentlessly attack every expense item on your P&L; clean out the dead weight (people and inventory); and move your desk to the center of the store. **MI**

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

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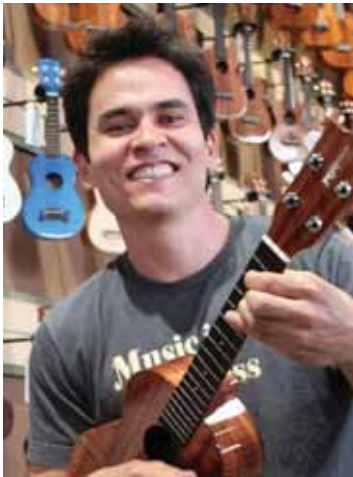
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ECONOMIC RHYTHMS | BY PETER DODS

# Amazon Cometh

The other day, I got an e-mail from a customer asking about a set of studio monitors. He was curious about everything from input options to my opinion on the quality. After about eight back and fourths, the customer asked if I could price match the item. I told him to send me the link of what he was looking at, adding that I might have to take any shipping charges into account. We are located in Hawaii, and not everything ships for free.



He sent me a link from Amazon.com. The product was eligible for “Prime,” so shipping was free and two-day air no less. I did a quick calculation. The sale came out to a 5 percent margin. Adding insult to injury, the customer asked if he could demo the monitors in-store. We’re always willing to help people like him in hopes that they eventually buy something at a decent margin and recommend our store to friends. Still, we can’t survive making 5 percent profit margins.

I imagine there’s a short-term gain in selling to Amazon and letting it move product at whatever price it pleases. Demand curves for most products are downward sloping, and any decrease in advertised price increases the amount of units sold. Manufacturers selling to Amazon don’t have to pick small shipments, and they only have to deal with one buyer. I can see how this is a tempting route. I understand that maintaining production quantities, especially in a down economy, is also important.

However, I’m not sure what manufacturers think the end game is on Amazon, so I’ll spell it out. If they continue selling to Amazon and don’t enforce MAP policies, they risk losing their physical representation in a storefront. If this continues across the board for all lines and all products, the showroom will indeed

disappear. (Big-box stores have already played a large role in removing the weak players from the industry.)

We plan to switch to another monitor brand, but what happens if the other brand gives into the mounting downward pricing pressure? If one person breaks MAP online, Amazon’s system automatically lowers its price. What happens when all manu-

facturers fall into this trap? My customer wanted to hear the speaker first. He wasn’t about to buy something he couldn’t demo, and he was looking for someone to connect the dots for him on the hookup side. What would’ve happened if he didn’t find a local store to help him? Could he call Amazon and ask questions? Good luck with that. Could he call Amazon and hear how the speaker sounds in a real studio setting? Hardly.

So what does this future portend? When the dust settles and all the showrooms are gone, I predict the industry will be less than half of what it is today. Manufacturers may be able to hold out longer than independent stores, but for how long? Where will the industry be when the inspiration, the demo, the vibe and the service disappear?

Yes, customers have the best of both worlds right now. They get me, my staff and a free demo and can quietly go home and buy for less on Amazon. But how long can this last?

Strong adherence to MAP is necessary, and in the long run, it protects the manufacturers as much as it does the dealers. I think a lot of manufacturers don’t get that these days. Let’s hope they figure it out before it’s too late. **MI**

Peter Dods is the owner of Honolulu-based Easy Music Center.

**Manufacturers, wake up. Selling to Amazon.com and not enforcing MAP will hurt you as much as it does your dealer base**



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LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

# Start Your Day Running

**D**o you start your workday like a bat out of hell, or do you ease into it? Do you start so slowly that you play catch-up until bedtime? What about your staff? Do they arrive at work ready to take on the world, or do you need a stick of dynamite to motivate them?

I was a dealer who loved to arrive hours before opening. I quickly learned that the extra hours offered productive time to accomplish things that had alluded me while I was putting out fires, fielding calls and questions, and conducting meetings during regular business hours.

I'm always surprised to find dealers who show up at their stores right at opening time — or worse, later. The most egregious example was a dealer who opened at noon but kept me, one of his employees and three customers waiting on the sidewalk for 15 minutes past opening. Then, he spent much of our meeting time complaining about business and how customers didn't seem to be showing up. Doesn't it make you wonder how much his work ethic and negative attitude contributed to his store's performance? What if he spent a little extra time before opening to write press releases for the local paper?

Your customers are like gold. Keeping them waiting is a mortal sin. They're the reason to start your day running, and early, allowing for cleaning, organizing, planning and preparation for show time when the first person arrives. But there are other reasons, too.

In my mind, the job of a store owner (or manager) simply can't be done in a 40-hour workweek. If you're doing everything that needs doing, you can't possibly be squeezing it all into normal operating hours. I learned that the work of just about any entrepreneurial job exceeds the normal time allocated. Mind you, I believe in balancing work and personal

time, but that balance slices both ways.

Another big reason to work the early shift is the example it sets for employees doing the heavy lifting. When you take the approach that your time at work is an intrusion on things you'd rather be doing, that attitude rubs off on your people, who look up to you as a role model. If you won't go the extra mile as the

key stakeholder, how can you expect anything more from them?

## MOTIVATING LATECOMERS

I found that my work habits rubbed off on my best people. Given an appropriate bellwether, your salespeople will rise to your level or sink to it, if that's the direction you lead them. I struggled for years with a certain group of consistently tardy employees. Some were talented, capable people who had the potential to do even better, given better work habits.

After lots of experimentation, I found a solution. As I've said before, I conducted a mandatory 15-minute pre-opening meeting every day. When the inevitable straggler arrived, it interrupted the meeting and sent a message to everyone else that some people got away with breaking the rules. So, I took those morning meetings out of the main section of my store, where employees and customers entered. I started the meetings precisely on time, allowing an opportunity for brief sales training and announcements. The late-arriving staff got the chance to stand outside waiting for the rest of us, pondering what they'd do the next day to assure an on-time arrival. **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](mailto:gersonmusicinc@gmail.com).



**'Your customers are like gold. Keeping them waiting is a mortal sin.'**





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FROM THE TRENCHES | BY MYRNA SISLEN

# The Halloween Recital

The best part of having music lessons in your store — aside from making a lot of money, integrating your business into the community and making your store a destination — is student recitals, which you should host on a regular basis.

Themed recitals are always fun, and our annual Halloween recital is the most fun of all, not to mention the most well-attended.

With a little planning and minimal financial outlay, you can have an event that will make parents and students happy.

As an added benefit, the press loves Halloween recitals. We always get our picture in the local newspaper, so don't forget to send press releases to all your contacts well in advance.



## How to host a themed music recital with scary-good results

### RECITAL PREPARATION

This year will mark Middle C Music's seventh annual Halloween recital. The kids have been preparing their musical selections for the last month. That said, you're not too late if you start at the beginning of October.

Fortunately, there's an abundance of Halloween music that's very accessible and easy-to-play. There are numerous choices for children and adults, which, by the way, is yet another excellent reason to stock print music in your store.

It's best to schedule the recital on the weekend before the actual holiday. Don't schedule your Halloween recital on Halloween. No one will come. Trust me.

### THE SECRET INGREDIENT

One of the most important things you will need for a successful Halloween recital is pumpkins. Lots of small pumpkins.

When I thought about having my first Halloween recital, I was concerned about how to keep the kids occupied while they waited to play. And then it came to me: We would give each child a pumpkin and have the kids draw musically themed pictures on them. I do it every year.

It's best if you can find small pumpkins. I shop around, and because I buy 65 or more — we have at least 65 students par-

ticipating — I can usually find pumpkins for only \$1 or less apiece. I construct a small mountain of pumpkins in the store. (If you have them in your store for more than a week, make sure the bottom pumpkins don't rot.) Before the recital begins, I invite the children to get on the floor, pass out the pumpkins and hand out plenty of colored magic markers. I then ask the kids to make sure their drawings are music-related and, of course, tell them they can keep their pumpkins. It works like a charm every time. The kids are quiet, respectful and happy.

### ADDING VALUE

All of my teachers are anxious to participate, and that means we have a wide array of instruments playing scary tunes. This gives the audience a chance to hear instruments other than their own.

Some of my teachers also hand out small bags of candy, but I don't think this is necessary. The recital itself always runs easily and smoothly because the atmosphere is appropriately scary yet relaxed. As with all my recitals, I record the performances, and each family gets a free copy of the DVD.

You can't lose on this event. Enjoy. **MI**

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



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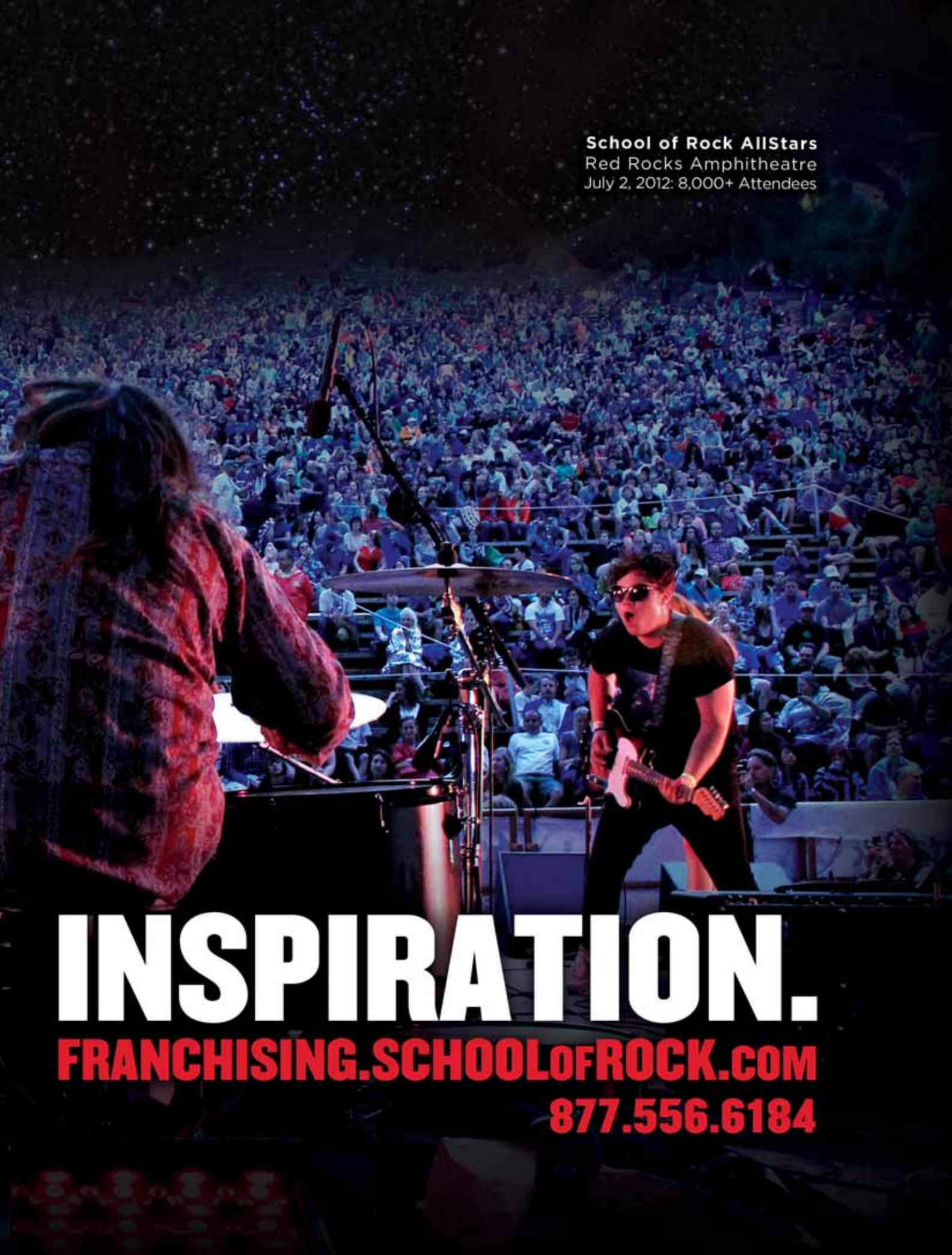
# SCHOOL OF ROCK

A photograph of a rock band performing on stage. In the foreground, a bassist in a black shirt and pants is playing a light-colored bass guitar. To his right, a drummer in a red shirt is partially visible. The background is filled with a large, dense crowd of people sitting in bleachers, watching the performance. The scene is lit with blue and red stage lights.

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A large crowd of people is seated in an amphitheatre, looking towards a stage. In the foreground, a guitarist with long hair, wearing a red jacket, is seen from the back, playing a guitar. Another guitarist, wearing sunglasses and a black t-shirt, is playing a pink electric guitar. A drum set is visible between them. The scene is lit with blue and red stage lights.

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Betti and  
Sami Lavi



A thriving Midwest Pro Sound & Lighting outlasts its competition by constantly seeking out new niches

BY KATIE KAILUS  
PHOTO BY WENDY ALAS

THE

ART OF

REINVENTION

Last summer, a nightclub owner walked into Midwest Pro Sound & Lighting to shop for a new venue he was opening.

He'd visited a few Chicago retailers, including the national chains, before returning to purchase \$40,000 worth of equipment.

The Chicago-based DJ, sound and lighting dealership also picked up the installation job.

"I asked him why he came back here, and he said it was because he liked the way my staff treated him and explained each product," said Sami Lavi, who owns and operates the 4,000-square-foot store with his wife, Betti.

"Coming to our store is like coming to a boutique. All my guys are knowledgeable and explain everything."

In other words, the Lavis' success stems from selling solutions, not products. They maintain an

experienced staff and continually refine and expand their product mix. Their entire business is also set up to demonstrate the latest trends for DJs and club impresarios alike. From live DJ and sound displays to one of the nation's most sophisticated lighting demo rooms, the Lavis and their staff strive to sell the right product by simply showing how it works.

That approach, in fact, has been critical to their longevity. When Sami purchased Midwest Pro Sound in 1978, it was one of the few DJ retailers in Chicago. That didn't last long. With the hip-hop and dance music boom of the 1980s, more than a dozen similar shops opened. Then, big-box music retail chains came to town, and almost as quickly, most of those DJ shops disappeared, unable to stay on top of the changing business. Today, Midwest Pro Sound is one of only a handful that remain in the area, and the Lavis credit their staying power to reinventing the store continuously.

“We’ve lasted because, when we saw the business change, we changed with it,” Sami said. “We weren’t going to get stuck selling stuff that’s dead. We moved on. It’s all about finding products other businesses don’t have.”

LET THERE BE LIGHTING

The store’s lighting room serves as a testament to that spirit of reinvention. As clubs of all sizes began craving more elaborate lighting displays, Midwest Pro Sound saw an opportunity. It built a 200-square-foot room with high ceilings, an environment that serves as a mini nightclub packed with more than 100 of the latest lighting effects of all shapes, sizes and price points. Each effect is hung from trussing along the walls or across the ceiling and wired into a Martin Light Jockey command center that has its own “wow” factor. Clients come in, relax on plush couches and chairs, and are treated to the ultimate light-show sampler. With the push of a few buttons, the lights go dim, a fog machine fills the room and customers can preview any and all effects Midwest has in stock, letting people see what the lights look like in an actual club setting. The

**‘When we saw the business change, we changed with it. We weren’t going to get stuck selling stuff that’s dead.’**

—Sami Lavi

room even boasts a ceiling fan to ventilate air after fog machine demos.

“This room really stands out,” said Matt Davis, lighting director at Midwest. “Maintaining this room is a weekly process, but it’s worth it.”

Sami mentioned the setup has drawn attention from not only customers but industry executives, as well.

“I have regional managers coming in from all over the place, and they say that they haven’t seen a lighting showroom like this before,” he said. “They’ve asked me, ‘Did you open a club for just yourself?’ It’s a lot of work to keep up, but if I’m a customer, I want to see what I’m buying.

[And as a store owner,] I’m not going to just show you something in a box and say, ‘OK, buy this.’”

The room has also been a boon to Midwest’s rental business. Along with P.A. systems, mixing consoles, speakers, sound systems and DJ equipment, the company rents all of the lighting effects on display in the store.

SYNTH NICHE

To expand its business, Midwest’s staff often seeks out

new product niches other shops might overlook. For example, analog synthesizers have been gaining traction recently with younger musicians, who crave vintage sounds and the ability to tweak and personalize their music. To cater to them, Midwest Pro Audio converted a rarely used recording studio in the store into a wonderland of Moog, Arturia, Dave Smith and Nord synthesizers.

“No one does modular synthesis in the Chicago area, and there’s a huge market for it right now,” said Andrew Marrah, director of online sales and the store’s keyboard expert. “Guitar Center doesn’t even do it. I know a lot of people who are willing to shell out the money, but they have to go online to buy it — and they can’t try it out there.”

Midwest now offers those clients what they want. The store’s \$200,000 fully functional recording studio has become a showroom for the new lines.

“These keyboards are gaining so much popularity,” Sami said. “So, we knew we had to get into the segment.”

The transformation hasn’t come about without a cost. Sami sold his Euphonix System 5 MC mixing board at a loss to make room for the new gear.

“The mixer cost me \$80,000,” he said. “I just wanted it out of there, so I can do what I need to do with that studio. [The recording studio] business is dead. I tried it, but I’m not going to stay with it if I see there’s nothing there.”

The recording studio will still be functional, but Davis said recording will be its secondary purpose. “Someone can still rent studio time here, but now, they are going to have more tools at their disposal. Now



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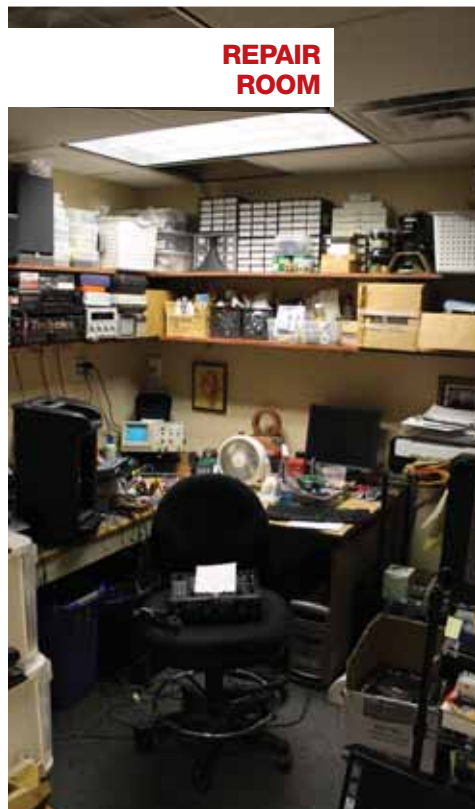
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we can up the value. It's not a very saturated market. There are good margins to be had on these products."

#### **DJ HANDIWORK**

Midwest Pro Sound has a hip address at the cross streets of Belmont and Lincoln Avenues on Chicago's North Side. The store rests in a prime location that attracts the city's thriving hip-hop, dance and club communities. When customers walk through the front door, they're met by a 14-foot-long table packed with 14 DJ software controllers, all plugged in, amped up and ready for a test drive.

Davis built the display from trussing. His goal was to create a hands-on station not unlike product demonstration tables found at Apple Stores.

"Manufacturers have all of the modular pieces necessary to build and design any sort of trussing design imaginable," Davis said. "So, I researched the pieces available and designed a table based on them."

Lights were added last and feature a controller, so they can change color for effect and remind DJs that lighting is an essential part of a show. Davis said he got the idea for the display table after attending a recent NAMM convention.

"We gathered some ideas





about tables and how manufacturers exhibited their products,” he said. “When we came back, we decided we wanted to build something to clean up the displays and make them unique.”

All the controllers on the table are wired to speakers and switches. If an associate needs to show a particular model, he or she can quickly plug in a USB cable for sound.

According to Davis, the tables draw a lot of customer attention. “Feedback has been very positive,” he said. “Customers like being able to compare one model to the next in a hands-on environment. Everyone seems to stop and play with a controller for a moment at least.”

#### WORKING TOGETHER

or some, working side by side with a significant other could pose a challenge. But according to Betti Lavi, she wouldn’t have it any other way.

“It’s always been a positive experience working with Sami, and I’ve learned a lot from him,” she said. “The older we get, the more we work together. Sometimes, couples bring [their work] home with them and bring their issues to work. We don’t. It’s a very pleasant environment here.”

The couple, who’ve been married for 21 years, have never had trouble divvying up



**LIGHTING CENTRAL**



**CUSTOM CONTROLLER TABLE**







Midwest Pro Sound & Lighting's staff: back row, from left: Erik Anderson, Andrew Marrah, Noleian Reusse, TJ Sandman, Frank Quinatoa. Front row, from left: Wesley Groves, Alberto Prieto, Betti Lavi, Sami Lavi, Matt Davis and Adam Stilson.

responsibilities. Betti said she simply took on more responsibility as she gained experience. Today, she manages the store's day-to-day operations. Sami joked that he's semi-retired, but he still comes to the store daily and serves as Midwest's frontman.

"Within the last four years, I've taken more control of the business," Betti said. "I manage the store, do the orders, supervise sales and delegate work. I have my hands in everything."

#### THE NEXT FRONTIER

Midwest launched its first website six years ago. More recently, the Lavis and their employees have been ramping up e-commerce as the company's next growth opportunity. For Sami, it's a chance to capture local business while capitalizing on Midwest Pro Sound's reputation beyond Chicago.

Currently, a staff of six most-

ly part-timers operate the site, with all design and upkeep being handled in-house. The site not only sells product but also offers a live online help center where shoppers can ask questions and negotiate deals.

It's another way for Midwest Pro Sound to differentiate itself, stay true to its core values and stand out from the crowd.

"You can only do so much business in the city," Sami said. "But [the website] is all over the world, and we get hits from all over the world. Lately, we've wanted to focus on taking our business to another level with the site."

The Midwest staff views e-commerce as an essential long-term opportunity. "Growth is definitely the goal for us," Marrah said of the company's e-commerce initiatives. He added that the Web development staff continuously hones and experiments with the site

because it's a rapidly evolving business segment.

"Eventually, the e-commerce site might even have a different name [or be] rebranded. It doesn't have to be 'Midwest.' Online, it might sound like it narrows us to a regional area."

#### EMPLOYEE LOYALTY, FAMILY-STYLE

Even with the company's find-it-yourself online presence and try-it-yourself displays, Midwest's staff sets the tone for the store — and closes sales. Many of the 12 full-time employees have worked at the dealership for 20-plus years, making sales manager Erik Anderson — a 10-year veteran of the shop — still just "one of the new guys."

"I keep my employees for so long because I'm nice to them," Sami said with a laugh. But Anderson added that the store's sense of community also binds the group together.

"From what I have seen, Sami is not just hiring for experience but also looking for people who mesh with our group," he said. "Because we have all been here for so long we're like a small family. We all do things together outside of the business and rely on each other for outside projects. We all have musical aspirations outside of the store, but it's the store itself that has kept us here."

"It goes back to trust and knowledge of the service," Sami said. "You might pay a little more for an item here, but it's worth it because you don't have the headache. We won't sell you the wrong product."

"Sometimes, I'll take the extra time and speak with somebody for 30 or 40 minutes and, in the end, not even make a sale," Davis said. "During that time, I'll tell them how to use some equipment they already have to achieve something that they are trying to achieve that they didn't know how to do. But that makes them think of you first next time they are looking to buy something."

It's a strategy that has created loyal customers, not to mention growth. One of the Lavis upcoming projects is to find a new, nearby warehouse to accommodate the new business.

"I want something close because I still love this location," Sami said. "I have to be centrally located. All the club installers in Chicago come here, and I also get people coming from Indiana, from everywhere. They can't find a business like this, where they can come in and buy exactly what they want."

And Midwest Pro Sound & Lighting will keep serving up solutions, even before their customers know they want them. **MI**



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TRAFFIC (AND  
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FLOWING THIS  
HOLIDAY SEASON**

# HOLIDAY SALES GUIDE

## GUITARS, AMPS & ACCESSORIES



**1 DANELECTRO LONGHORN** Danelectro's Longhorn bass is back. The instrument's exaggerated double cutaway makes for easy access to the upper frets. The new model also features a masonite body and classic Dano lipstick pickups. The Danelectro Longhorn is available in a retro-looking copperburst finish with contrasting chrome and cream binding. [danelectro.com](http://danelectro.com)



**2 VINTAGE VR100W** The Vintage Reissued electric guitar line has added the Vintage VR100W, a single P90 model. Ideal for punk and classic rock, the VR100W features a Wilkinson W90SK stacked ceramic pickup, which offers hum-canceling performance. Other features include a set maple neck, 22 frets, rosewood fingerboard, single volume and tone controls, and wrapover bridge tailpiece. [jhs.co.uk.com](http://jhs.co.uk.com)



**3 IBANEZ RG PREMIUM** Ibanez has expanded its Premium series by offering a version of the RG Premium with a maple fingerboard. Though it offers the distinct feel and tonal attack of a maple fretboard, the RG920MQM boasts all the attributes of the RG Premium, including a five-piece maple and walnut neck, custom-wound DiMarzio IBZ humbuckers, and Edge Zero II with the Zero Point System. [ibanez.com](http://ibanez.com)



**4 ESOTERIK DR3** Esoterik Guitars has debuted the DR3. It's the third model in Dave Reffett's line of signature guitars. This lightweight model is designed to deliver maximum speed, response and clarity. Features include a five-piece walnut and figured maple neck, 24 jumbo frets, dual-spoke wheel truss rods, and a 25.5-inch scale length. MSRP: \$3,595. [esoterikguitars.com](http://esoterikguitars.com)





5

### 5 LÂG TRAMONTANE

Lâg Guitars recently added the Arkane and Imperator solid-body electric guitars to its Tramontane acoustic series. The Lâg Arkane is a double-cutaway, and the Lâg Imperator is a single-cutaway. Both guitars are available in color combinations ranging from solid to burst finishes with quilted and flame maple. MAP: ranges from \$199–\$1,299. [lagguitars.com](http://lagguitars.com)



6

### 6 FENDER AMERICAN VINTAGE

Fender has expanded its American Vintage series. The new units feature thick and slim necks with resculpted profiles and edges. New additions include the American Vintage '56, '59 and '65 Stratocaster models; American Vintage '58 and '64 Telecaster models; American Vintage '65 Jazzmaster; American Vintage '65 Jaguar; and American Vintage '52 Telecaster. [fender.com](http://fender.com)



7

### 7 JACKSON JS SERIES

Jackson has added to its JS series with the JS2 Kelly Bird IV and the JS3 Kelly Bird IV. The JS2 offers a basswood body, bolt-on maple neck and 21-fret rosewood fingerboard with block inlays. The JS3 features dual Jackson JS high-output covered pickups, a three-band active EQ, a Jackson high-mass bridge and Jackson tuners. Finishes include Trans Black and Trans Blue Burst. [jacksonguitars.com](http://jacksonguitars.com)



8

### 8 AXL USA 1216, USA SRO

The AXL USA series guitars are now available in black and sunburst finishes. The new USA 1216 Artist in vintage sunburst finish comes with Seymour Duncan Seth Lover pickups. The new gloss black 1216 Classic model features AXL Alnico pickups. Seymour Duncan Five-Two pickups mix Alnico 2 magnets on the treble strings for a softer attack on the sunburst USA SRO Artist. [axlguitars.com](http://axlguitars.com)



BY ZACH PHILLIPS

# HOT SELLER: THE UKE

**P**M Music Center sold more than 100 ukuleles during June and July. This holiday season, Jason Pachona, manager of the Aurora, Ill., full-line dealer, is banking on that number growing.

“We definitely have noticed more interest in ukuleles around the holidays, and sales seem to substantiate that claim,” he said.

Other retailers confirmed this trend at their stores. Greg Weast, president of Columbia River Music in The Dalles, Ore., mentioned seeing an uptick in uke sales during the holidays and having his greatest success with the Kala brand. Connie Smith, general manager of Ward-Brodt Music in Madison, Wis., said that the holidays account for more than 40 percent of her annual uke sales.

“We always see a spike in ukulele sales from September through December, around 50 percent plus,” said Guy Petty, founder of SHS International, which distributes Eddy Finn ukuleles. “The past couple years have been closer to 70 percent due to the ukulele’s rebound popularity.”

#### PACKAGE DEALS

**P**M Music Center carries models ranging from \$40–\$300. Like Columbia River Music, Kala ranks as PM’s



Jason Pachona

Photo by Jeff Cagle

best-seller. Pachona credited his store’s product diversity as a key factor in driving sales, along with front-and-center displays. Last holiday, PM Music Center had an assortment of its most popular colored ukuleles beneath a Christmas tree to pique interest. This year, Pachona said the company might offer ukulele bundles at reduced prices.

Pacific Winds in Eugene, Ore., has experienced a boost in holiday uke sales, in part, by doing just that: The dealership creates packages featuring an instrument, case and lesson book. The company also usually runs a special for a free tuner with a uke purchase. And accord-

ing to Pat Knaus, company co-owner, the instruments are popular among both children and adults. Her biggest sellers include the Kala Makala, along with models from Cordoba, Kamao, Magic Fluke and Ohana.

#### WEB SUPPORT

Leslie Faltin, co-owner of Tucson, Ariz.-based Instrumental Music Center, promotes ukuleles on her company’s home page during the holiday season. She drives traffic to the page using Google AdWords, and last year, she ran an ad stating, “We take ukuleles seriously.” The home page advertises that Instrumental Music Center

has “Tucson’s largest variety of ukes, starting at \$39.” To deliver on that promise, Faltin often mixes in a few unique models, such as a Recording King resonator ukulele, with the rest of her selection.

“We were literally selling three a day,” she said of her ukulele sales during the holidays. She added that the Yamaha Guitalele GL-1 has been an especially strong seller. “We sold four to one family.”

Weast has harnessed social media to get the word out about his uke business. “For whatever reason, our Facebook page is really starting to help in promotions,” he said, noting that he’ll mix general announcements with sales-inducing promotions.

Smith admitted Ward-Brodt hasn’t promoted ukes heavily in the past, but that will change this season. “This year, we are trying to get a uke clinic going,” she said. “If that happens, we would include admission to the clinic with the purchase of the uke. We have someone on staff who could do a Saturday morning uke-along for anyone who purchases.”

“Next year, we hope to add a third line with some higher-end ukuleles, perhaps something Hawaiian-made,” Pachona said. “The sky’s the limit, and it doesn’t appear this uke craze has slowed down.” **MI**





LM | BLOOD DIARY

## Bloody Cool

LM Straps' new Blood Diary series of guitar straps uses technology that prints photo-quality images directly on the straps. The new models are made from high-gloss white patent leather to bring out the artistic nature of the straps and catch stage lights. Each one is backed and detail-stitched. **{Improducts.com}**



LEVY'S LEATHERS |  
DISTRESSED STRAPS

## Distressed Success

Levy's Leathers has re-released distressed leather guitar straps. Each model is a 2.5-inch-wide cut of distressed carving leather and finished with a burnished edge. They're available in dark brown only. **{levysleathers.com}**

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PROTECTION RACKET | MUSICIAN'S TOOL KIT BAG

## Tool Time

Protection Racket has debuted the Musician's Tool Kit Bag. Musicians can store such items as earphones, drum keys, picks, tools and Sharpies in the bag. Measuring 15 by 12 by 3 inches, the bag unzips all the way around for easy access to the single main compartment, which features six internal zipped pockets that are 100-percent waterproof. **{protectionracket.co.uk}**

## Gator 3G Guitar Gig Bag

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BY HILARY BROWN

# HOLIDAY STOMPING

With their relatively low overhead, reasonable cost to customers and booming profit margins, stomp boxes are becoming prime stocking-stuffer candidates for MI dealers. But what pedals will be seasonal standouts amid the holiday traffic? Five dealers weigh in on their top candidates.

**HEAVY ELECTRONICS  
RADIO HAVANA**

Never mind in-store promotions, said **Cory Lake of American Guitar Boutique in Plymouth, Minn.** "Video marketing is it right now. A good percentage of my clients coming in the door have watched some sort of video online." Lake is amped up about showing those customers his preferred pedal, the boutique Radio Havana popularized by Heavy Electronics. The highly responsive, hand-crafted pedal pushes odd frequencies to the forefront, creating a metallic, vintage sound that Lake said is "perfect for everything." [heavyelectronics.com](http://heavyelectronics.com)



**BOSS VE-5 VOCAL MULTI FX PEDAL**  
**Alan Rosen of San Rafael, Calif.,** combo dealership **Bananas at Large** has observed a sharp increase in the popularity of Boss Vocal Performer processors, namely the VE-5. "I think this year is going to see a dramatic rise in Vocal Multi FX pedals," Rosen said. The VE-5 is a tabletop solution in comparison to its cousin, the VE-20, but it still packs plenty of effects, including reverb, delay and dynamics processing. [bossus.com](http://bossus.com)



**ELECTRO-HARMONIX  
TONE TATTOO**

"The ridiculous simplicity of this pedal from a well-established brand makes it an easy sell to any level of player," said **Micah Spruill of Alpha Music in Virginia Beach, Va.,** about Electro-Harmonix's unique, all-analog multieffects stomp box. The pedal combines three of the brand's most popular offerings — Metal Muff distortion, Neo Clone chorus and Memory Toy delay — into one chassis, creating what Spruill calls the "cornerstone" of most pedal setups. [ehx.com](http://ehx.com)



**WALRUS AUDIO  
VOYAGER**

For **Fat Tone Guitars' Phil Vickman, a Northbrook, Ill.-based dealer** who does 90 percent of his business online, the gift of giving is just as important as his active social media presence, which he said is key to successful search engine optimization. "We often do a lot of giveaways," said Vickman, noting the recent popularity of up-and-comer Walrus Audio. "We've been carrying them for four months, and I do not see them slowing down." [walrusaudio.com](http://walrusaudio.com)



**WAMPLER BRAD  
PAISLEY OVERDRIVE**

**Chris Rodriguez, the resident pedal expert at Rockford, Ill., retailer Music Nation 1,** said that despite its namesake, Wampler's Brad Paisley Overdrive has been coveted by musicians of all genres for months. In addition to providing in-store literature on the product, Rodriguez likes to set up a "good, clean amp and guitar" with the pedal for demos. [wamplerpedals.com](http://wamplerpedals.com)







MEISEL | CHROMATIC METROTUNER

## Tiny Tuner

Meisel's new COM-250 Metrotuner features a special clip designed to fit violin and viola scrolls. Because of the clip's unique design and extra-wide opening, the COM-250 fits virtually any musical instrument. Features include a color display; reference pitch adjustment from 410–490 Hz; built-in mic or clip transducer; visual metronome; and speed from 30–280 beats per minute. The tuner only weighs 1.25 ounces and is powered by one 2032 3-volt coin battery. [meiselaccessories.com](http://meiselaccessories.com)



GODLYKE | HAO BASS LINER

## HAO Headliner

Godlyke has debuted the HAO Bass Liner. The unit's simple yet effective user interface invites precise tone-tweaking at home, on stage or in the studio. The Bass Liner is ideal for use with powered speaker cabinets and can even be run direct into a P.A. or mixing console. Features include an input gain control, allowing optimization for use with any instrument or electronics, and a red clipping indicator LED. MSRP: \$399. [godlyke.com](http://godlyke.com)



BASSMAXX | CCM112

## Amped Up

Bassmaxx recently launched the bi-amped CCM112 YesMon powered monitor. The CCM112 is a compact 12-inch monitor that incorporates a 1,500-watt Power-soft class D amplifier coupled to a high power handling neodymium woofer and a co-axially mounted 1.4-inch exit compression driver. The co-axial point source provides more consistent off-axis response and feedback rejection. [bassmaxx.com](http://bassmaxx.com)



SKB | FOOTNOTE

## Happy Feet

SKB's new 1SKB-FN-8 FootNote Amplified pedalboard features a 5-watt combo amp and 6-inch Eminence speaker. The FootNote is injection-molded with a 9- by 12-inch sloped mounting surface and will power up to eight 9VDC battery-powered pedals with the supplied cables. The board is ideal for home, studio, smaller venues and classroom environments. MAP: \$179.99. [skbcases.com](http://skbcases.com)





**1 BOURGEOIS GUITARS RAY LAMONTAGNE SIGNATURE SERIES** Bourgeois Guitars recently collaborated with Grammy winner Ray LaMontagne to release a Ray LaMontagne Signature guitar. Built from master-grade Sitka spruce and mahogany, each guitar is signed by both guitar designer Dana Bourgeois and LaMontagne. [bourgeoisguitars.com](http://bourgeoisguitars.com)

**2 TANGLEWOOD PREMIER SERIES** Tanglewood's new Premier series features all-mahogany models. The collection is comprised of the TW138 slope-shoulder dreadnought, the TW130 orchestra model and the TW133 parlor model. The instruments feature no-frills aesthetics — this series is focused on the beauty of the bodies and their detailed tone. [tanglewoodguitars.com](http://tanglewoodguitars.com)

**3 EDDY FINN BAMBOO UKULELES** Eddy Finn has released bamboo ukuleles. The instruments feature a high-gloss finish; rosewood fretboard and bridge; and bamboo top, neck, back and sides. Size options include concert, soprano and tenor. MSRP: acoustic only, \$179.95–\$199.95; electric acoustics, \$224.95–\$249.95. [shop-shs.com](http://shop-shs.com)

**4 CORT MR1200FX** Cort Guitars recently unveiled the MR1200FX. The new model features a dreadnought body with a Bearclaw spruce top; solid rosewood back and sides; abalone purfling on the top and sides; and abalone inlay on the fingerboard and headstock. The guitar comes equipped with a Fishman premium stereo on-board blender and Matrix pickups. MSRP: \$1,350. [cortguitars.com](http://cortguitars.com)





# BLACK INK FRIDAY

**RON BEAUDOIN**  
Music & Arts; Frederick, Md.  
*As told to Music Inc.*

Starting in 2008, we had our best Black Friday ever. Up until then, Black Friday had been just another day for Music & Arts. It was a mall event. But in 2008, we decided that we would try to play with the big boys.

We had a couple of barn-door burners. The first X number of people got a free iPod. We messaged that via e-mail, fliers that got dis-

tributed in schools and bag-stuffers with transactions a few weeks prior to Thanksgiving. We also had a note on the website that said, "Coming soon!"

We teased customers. We didn't tell them what it was until Thanksgiving night. And that first year, we opened early. We opened at 8 instead of 10 p.m., which was a calculated risk.

*Music & Arts finds wild success by going head-to-head with the malls*

I've been in the business for 30 years. That was my first time doing it, and it was wildly successful. We had people lined up. Store managers got there at 7, and there were already people outside with lawn chairs and coffee.

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GATOR | MICROPHONE CASES

## Watertight Cases

Gator Cases recently added a new line of waterproof, injection-molded microphone cases. Available in two styles, the new series provides heavy-duty protection and security for up to six or 16 hand-held microphones. The line features a waterproof and dust-proof seal with IP 67 and Mil-STD-810F immersion test certifications. [gatorcases.com](http://gatorcases.com)



EARTHWORKS | WL40V

## Cool Capsule

Earthworks recently released the WL40V wireless vocal microphone capsule. The WL40V is suitable for use in a variety of live sound applications. The capsule head has a three-ring bulls-eye connector and is interchangeable with any of the screw-on hand-held transmitters. The unit delivers a detailed, realistic vocal sound that requires little to no EQ. MAP: \$899. [earthworksaudio.com](http://earthworksaudio.com)



AUDIO SPECTRUM | DJM618

## Out of the Spectrum

Audio Spectrum's new DJM618 Gooseneck microphone is sonically tailored to reproduce the spoken voice and is ideal for DJ, broadcast and announcement applications. Designed for use with XLR mic inputs, the DJM618 is compatible with popular professional DJ mixers, audio consoles and podium mounts. MAP: \$24.99.

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







ACOUSTICS FIRST | PHASEFOAM

## Foam-tastic

Acoustics First has released PhaseFoam. The product can be used to correct sound problems in music rehearsal spaces, teaching studios, vocal booths and tracking rooms. The system lets you configure and design your sound and layout using the key components contained in two simple acoustic foam kits. [phasefoam.com](http://phasefoam.com)



AURALEX ACOUSTICS | PROPAD

## Optimized Monitoring

Auralex Acoustics' new ProPad monitor isolation pad is the latest product in the Instant Sound Optimizer line. Compared to Auralex's MoPad, ProPad has increased durability and structural integrity and provides isolation from the vibrations and resonant energy created by studio monitors. [auralex.com](http://auralex.com)

K-ARRAY | PICCOLO

## Compact Speaker

Senneiser has debuted the Piccolo system by K-array. The loudspeaker system features two 3.6-inch mid-high speakers and a compact subwoofer. Set up is quick with standard RCA and XLR connectors to support multiple source inputs, such as TV, DVD and iPod. In addition to two mini-speakers, a subwoofer and an amplification module, the system comes with a basic wiring kit, table stands and brackets for wall installation. [k-array.com](http://k-array.com)





### BOSE | ROOMMATCH

## So Roomy

Bose has expanded the range of available coverage patterns for the RoomMatch array module loudspeakers with five new patterns. The series now includes 20 unique coverage patterns, which provide system designers with coverage control and scalability for such venues as houses of worship, auditoriums and performing arts centers. **{bose.com}**



### TRANSAUDIO | SONODYNE

## Major Monitor

TransAudio's new two-way nearfield SM200AK monitor is the largest in Sonodyne's Reference series line. It incorporates an 8-inch Kevlar woofer and 1-inch metal dome tweeter. The unit features a rigid die-cast aluminum front baffle with non-parallel wood sides. **{transaudiogroup.com}**



### PEAVEY | PVX SERIES

## Heavy-duty Sound

Peavey recently launched the PVX loudspeaker series. The Peavey RX14 1.4-inch titanium diaphragm compression driver coupled to a constant directivity horn reproduces clear high and mid-high frequencies, while heavy-duty woofers handle the lows and low-mids. **{peavey.com}**





Photo credit: Robert Downes Photography



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Blink-182's Travis Barker relies on Audix microphones to capture his signature sound and bring it to audiences worldwide. Travis uses the Audix D6 on kick, i5 on snare, M44 on toms, SCX1C on overheads and SCX1HC on hi-hat.

Audix is the industry leader when it comes to drum mic packages. Be sure to stock them!





JDK | 8MX2

## Mix It Up

JDK has rolled out its new 8MX2 pre-amp and mixer. Equipped with eight microphone pre-amps, each channel contains a variable threshold peak limiter, 48-volt phantom power switch, phase reverse, direct output and path to the stereo mix bus. The included eight-into-two mixer receives a signal from the mic pre or eight external line-level inputs. [jdkaudio.com](http://jdkaudio.com)

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NADY | MAXTOWER PAS-250

## Maximum Portability

Nady Systems has introduced the MaxTower PAS-250, a self-contained, portable line array 250-watt P.A. system. The unit delivers full-range audio quality and enhanced coverage for a variety of venues. The eight-speaker configuration provides wider dispersion and more sonic penetration than standard cabinet speakers. [nady.com](http://nady.com)







TK AUDIO | TK-LIZER

# TK's New Addition

TK Audio recently released the TK-lizer, which boasts a Baxandall type of EQ. High and low bands are selectable between shelving or bell and are useful for fine-tuning lows, mids and highs. The EQ also has a built-in M/S function, which allows for the mid and side signals to be processed separately. [tkaudio.se](http://tkaudio.se)



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# HOLIDAYSALESGUIDE

## DRUMS & PERCUSSION



GRETSCH DRUMS | ROUND BADGE PRACTICE PADS

## Practice Always Makes Perfect

Gretsch Drums has introduced four new practice pads modeled after the Round Badge, a mainstay on Gretsch drums for four decades. The pads feature a silica-gel surface with a dense wood base and include a pad mount insert that fits any standard practice pad stand or cymbal stand. MSRP: 6-inch, \$35.99; 12-inch, \$55.99. [gretschdrums.com](http://gretschdrums.com)



ZILDJIAN | GEN 16, CLOTHING

## Sweet Wears

Zildjian's Gen16 cymbal system and recently released fall clothing collection should prove to be sure-fire holiday sellers. The clothing lineup includes T-shirts, sweatsuit combos and beanie caps. One T-shirt features an off-center classic A Custom logo, and the other boasts an oversized graphic cymbal. [zildjian.com](http://zildjian.com)



BIG BANG | GORILLA SNOT

## Saved by Snot

Big Bang recently re-released Gorilla Snot, a naturally sticky substance created to help drummers and guitarists improve their grip on sticks, mallets and picks. The substance also reduces cramping and muscle fatigue. A touch of Gorilla Snot on a player's thumb and index finger works whether his or her hands are completely dry or perspiring. Once applied, Gorilla Snot dries quickly, forming a tacky surface that is moisture-resistant. [bigbangdist.com](http://bigbangdist.com)



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LATIN PERCUSSION | ASPIRE CONGAS, BONGOS

### Jam With Jamjuree

Latin Percussion recently released its new edition of Aspire Congas and bongos made from jamjuree wood. Sometimes called Siam walnut, jamjuree is 15-percent lighter in weight than Siam oak yet still delivers ideal tone and resonance. The congas are 28 inches tall and come in sets of two with head combinations of 10 and 11 inches. [lpmusic.com](http://lpmusic.com)



SABIAN | AAX V-CRASHES

### Crash, Boom!

Sabian recently launched its AAX V-Crashes. The cymbals are bright, high-pitched and available in a brilliant finish. The thin models are medium to loud in volume. AAX V-Crashes also benefit from a power-increasing bell and balanced bell-to-bow response for a strong front-end attack and a full, shimmering sound with wide response sensitivity. [sabian.com](http://sabian.com)



SKB | PERCUSSION CASES

### Super-safe

SKB's complete line of percussion hard cases is rotomolded with the patented Roto-X pattern for added strength, durability and reliable stacking. The sure-grip handles boast a 90-degree stop for easy lifting and transport. Cases feature padded interiors and are available for snare, bass, tom, floor tom, hardware and trap, cymbal, and mallet. [skbcases.com](http://skbcases.com)





BY ZACH PHILLIPS

# HOT PROMOTION: THE ONLINE GIVEAWAY

For Sweetwater, the holidays are a time to give back.

Every November, the Fort Wayne, Ind., dealership launches the “24-Day Giveaway” on [sweetwater.com](http://sweetwater.com)’s home page. The promotion gives customers a chance to win everything from a hand-held recorder to an all-out Pro Tools rig, with a new giveaway every day for — you guessed it — 24 days. Sweetwater starts doling out prizes on Dec. 1 and continues through Christmas Eve.

According to Mike Ross, the company’s vice president of marketing, the promotion also helps draw new customers to Sweetwater’s website and gives him a treasure trove of valuable data.

“That has been very successful for us because we’re saying, ‘Here’s an opportunity to win something, but it’s not just one opportunity — there are 24 win-



Mike Ross

ners over 24 days,” Ross said.

“We acquire a certain number of new customers, and they get a chance to experience Sweetwater, even if it’s only at the website for that particular moment. And I get a chance to gather some data and reach out to them.”

Ross noted that his company

also makes an effort to avoid holiday-promotion overload. He acknowledged he could start publicizing holiday specials in early October, but he tries to “be respectful” of consumers’ desire to “not be attacked so early in the season.”

“And at the end of the day,

it’s just a great interaction between us and our customers.”

That interaction continues well after the holidays, too. Ross pointed out that Sweetwater’s holiday buyer’s guide, *ProGear*, is branded as a “winter” edition, so customers can keep turning to it in January and February. The guide breaks out products by application and price.

“We create a buying guide that says, ‘If you’re only spending this much money, we’ll gather some of the coolest stuff at \$100 or below,’” he said. “It makes shopping for them easier, so you’re not looking through a bunch of categories that are out of your price range or a bunch of stuff that doesn’t apply to your price range.

“Everybody thinks Q4 is about the sale of the moment, but there’s a big part of it that’s about helping somebody in the year that’s coming up.”

## SUPER-CHARGED HOLIDAY WEBSITES

### VANESSA FITZGERALD

Alto Music; Middletown, N.Y.  
*As told to Music Inc.*

We promote any and all specials and sales on our website directly on the product listing and on our home page with sliding ads. If, let’s say, a Fender Stratocaster was on special for the month of December, we would make a home page ad that linked to the product, put it in our holiday section, spice up the website listing for the product and post it to our Facebook page with a link directly to the item.

In addition, we make Alto Music

bundles for each section of our site and develop our “Alto Music Holiday Shopping Section” with eye-catching graphics, bundles, and any and all products that people might be looking for during the season. We like to stay competitive with all the other sites out there doing the same thing, but we add our Alto Music touch.

We send out holiday mailers, make ads and post to our social networks. Our Fano guitar selection did very well on our Facebook page, and we received a lot of response from our fans. We also make landing pages for some of the really hot items or for a particular brand.



**PROMOTE LESSONS & CUSTOMIZED PACKS**

**DONOVAN BANKHEAD**

Springfield Music;  
Springfield, Mo.



We operate a profitable lesson program, so we are always looking to grow it. We offer half off the first month of lessons for people who purchase a month of lessons *when* purchasing an instrument during the holidays. We also spiff our salespeople for selling lessons.

The past few years, we have assembled our own guitar packs. This allows us to use higher-quality instruments, with fewer accessories, and hit attractive price points. It also makes it easier for us to stand out from the big-box retailers offering the manufacturers' guitar packs. It does take some time to order the items for the packs, but the great thing is that after the holiday season, since they are not the normal packs, they are easier to assimilate back into our regular inventory.

These promotions, when combined with effective print, Web and direct e-mail, have resulted in increased sales and lesson sign-ups and give us an edge over the local big-box stores.

**STOCKING-STUFFER GUIDES**

**MARK DESPOTAKIS**

Progressive Music; McKeesport, Pa.

The days of selling a ton of drum sets at Christmas seem to have passed, so we market smaller accessory products. A promotion that we usually do is create holiday stocking-stuffer guides. It's kind of like a checklist of small items. We have them available in the store as 8 1/2- by 11-inch fliers, and we have them on our website as a PDF. I think it also helps our floor salespeople have a sense of some ideas to suggest to customers.

**ULTIMATE SUPPORT | V-STAND PRO**

**Ultimate Stand**

Ultimate Support's V-Stand Pro is now available. It will hold keyboards as securely as it will mixing boards and DJ gear. The unit folds down into a compact unit that can be transported in a custom-designed gig bag. [ultimatesupport.com](http://ultimatesupport.com)



**HARRIS MUSICAL PRODUCTS | MELODICAS**

**Melodica Mania**

With an MSRP of less than \$50, Harris Musical Products' new branded melodicas are designed to be an impulse item for the holidays and beyond. The melodica combines the properties of a wind instrument and keyboard, creating an easy-to-learn and easy-to-play organ. Harris currently offers 32- and 37-key models in various colors. [harrismusical.com](http://harrismusical.com)



# A GRAND REVOLUTION IN SOUND TECHNOLOGY

The next generation Privia digital pianos have arrived. Featuring the new AiR (Acoustic Intelligent & Resonant) engine, a redesigned tri-sensor scaled hammer action with ebony and ivory finished keys, the sound and feel of the new Privia models is beyond revolutionary.

Privia



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[www.casiomusicgear.com](http://www.casiomusicgear.com)



YAMAHA | P-105

## Perfected Feel

The new P-105 portable digital piano from Yamaha is an ideal practice instrument for the beginner to intermediate pianist, along with the price-conscious semi-professional. The instrument features an 88-note Graded Hammer Standard (GHS) weighted action keyboard that feels heavier in the low end and lighter in the top. The P-105 also has the PureCF sound engine, which recreates the sound of Yamaha's CFIIIS concert grand piano. [yamaha.com](http://yamaha.com)

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BY ZACH PHILLIPS

# ELEGANT SHOPPING

For the past three years, Denton, Cottier & Daniels has kicked off the holiday season with “An Artful and Elegant Holiday Shopping Party.” The one-night event fills the Getzville, N.Y., piano dealership’s showroom with 25 local vendors, who sell a high-end clientele everything from jewelry to luxury cars. And by partnering with these businesses, Denton, Cottier & Daniels gets 25 times the promotional power.

“They can only participate if they invite their whole e-mail lists, and

they have to share it on Facebook,” said Vice President Michelle Wlosinski, who added that the event’s only cost is the price of a piano player. (An employee usually fills in.)

She acknowledged that she was “scrambling” to bring in vendors before the inaugural party. Now, many local businesses see it as an attractive way to get their wares in front of luxury-product buyers.

And according to Wlosinski, squeezing 25 vendors into her company’s 6,000-square-foot showroom

hasn’t been a problem: They fit right into the curves of displayed pianos. This year, she’s even moving the event to her company’s slightly smaller Rochester store.

For Denton, Cottier & Daniels, the party serves as a powerful holiday traffic builder. Plus, Wlosinski said she’s also sold pianos because of the event — if not that night, then after the holidays.

“There have been people who were our customers, and it gave us an excuse to invite them back,” she said.



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## HOLIDAYSALESGUIDE



### BAND & ORCHESTRA

KÖNIG & MEYER | TRUMPET STAND

## Elegant Display

König & Meyer's latest trumpet stand is designed to display an instrument elegantly or store it for future use. A sturdy base and large floor protectors make the stand extremely stable, and it folds up for easy transport. Even miked trumpets are easy to set on the unit. **{[km-america.com](http://km-america.com)}**



E. ROUSSEAU | MOUTHPIECES

## Rousseau's Sound

E. Rousseau, Dr. Eugene Rousseau's saxophone mouthpiece brand, recently debuted the Classic RC series. The alto sax models feature a centered, dark tone; a wide dynamic range with strong response; and an improved lower register. E. Rousseau also offers the Classic R, New Classic, Studio Jazz, JDX and Jazz Metal series mouthpieces. They're distributed through Conn-Selmer. **{[conn-selmer.com](http://conn-selmer.com)}**



RS BERKELEY | LEGENDS SERIES

## Celebrating Woody Shaw

RS Berkeley and Greg Black Mouthpieces have unveiled the Woody Shaw Legends series trumpet mouthpiece. It features silver plating, a 0.62-inch inner rim and a semi-flat rim contour. **{[rsberkeley.com](http://rsberkeley.com)}**





ON-STAGE STANDS | SM7312W

## Extra Room

On-Stage Stands' new SM7312W conductor stand features an oversized 13.5- by 22-inch solid wood bookplate. This accommodates large music books and offers spare room for batons, metronomes and pencils. The unit also has a rosewood finish and an angle-adjustment tension system that makes for easy bookplate positioning. High-impact leg housing, friction-locking knobs and non-slip rubber feet deliver additional support. [onstagestands.com](http://onstagestands.com)



D'ADDARIO | HELICORE

## Alternate Tuning

D'Addario created its new Helicore Fourth-Tuning cello string set for bass tuning — E, A, D, G, low to high. This allows for new chordal and scalar possibilities in alternative cello playing, as well as a way for bass and guitar players to adapt to the cello quickly. The strings boast a rich, powerful tone that delivers clarity and balance across all notes. MSRP: \$262.25. [daddario.com](http://daddario.com)



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DENIS WICK | AMERICAN CLASSIC

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Denis Wick has turned its attention to the U.S. trumpet market with the new American Classic series. Based on well-known American-style mouthpieces, the lineup features 1.25C, 1.5C, 1.5CH, 3C, 5C and 7C models. Denis Wick created this numbering system to correspond with standard U.S. mouthpiece sizing. [deniswickusca.com](http://deniswickusca.com)

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# HOLD AN OPEN HOUSE

**LORI SUPINIE**  
Sensene Music; Wichita, Kan.  
*As told to Music Inc.*

We started a Holiday Open House three years ago, and it has become a fun event that we look forward to hosting.

We have it on a Saturday, generally two weeks after the post-Thanksgiving frenzy. Our store is decorated beautifully for the holidays. In addition to promoting our guitar, drum and keyboard packages, as well as doorbuster items and musical gifts, we also have a pick-your-discount drawing at the cashier station on regularly priced items. This past year, we added an additional discount for music teachers.

Of course, we have cookies and hot cider and a visit from Santa Claus. What has become the big draw, however, is our live music. Even though we have a recital hall in our

lower level, we wanted the music to be on the sales floor, so we've utilized a small stage area and have hosted a variety of performers, from our lesson students to school and community groups to professional players who are friends of the store. Sometimes, they owe us money, and we can barter a performance from them. Sometimes, they want to be part of the fun.

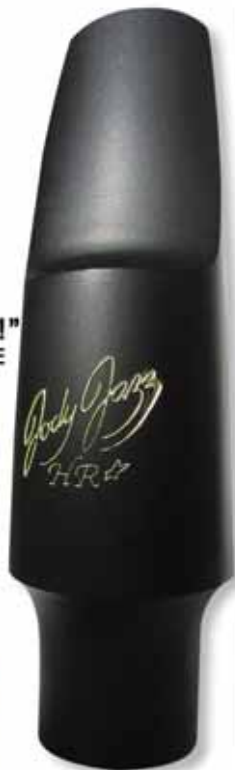
*'The Holiday Open House has grown about 10 percent in revenues every year.'*

We've used a variety of advertising methods, but our e-mail marketing to our known customers is probably what drives people to the store. The Holiday Open House has grown about 10 percent in revenues every year, and it has become a great customer-appreciation event for us.

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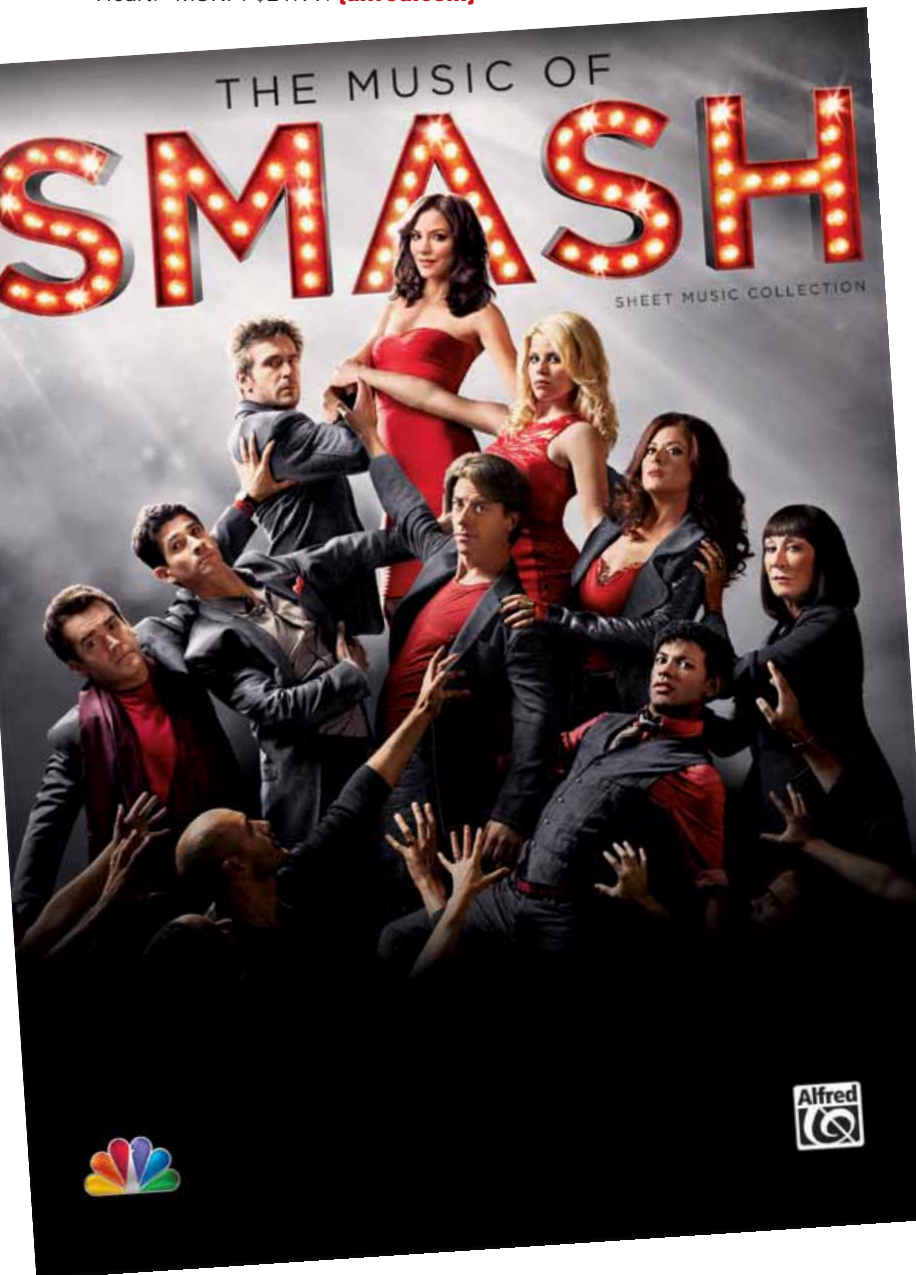
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is open to manufacturers of piano products.



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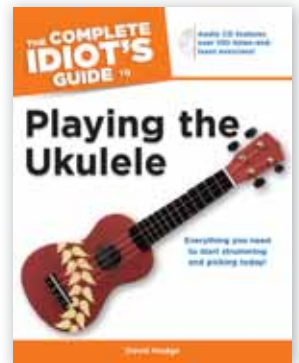
Alfred Music Publishing has released *The Music Of Smash: Sheet Music Collection*, a folio from the NBC hit television series, arranged for piano, vocal and guitar. The songbook includes complete sheet music arrangements to every song on *The Music Of Smash* album, with such fan favorites as "Touch Me," "Beautiful," "Let Me Be Your Star," "History Is Made At Night" and "Never Give All The Heart." MSRP: \$21.99. [alfred.com](http://alfred.com)



THE COMPLETE IDIOT'S GUIDE | 'PLAYING THE UKULELE'

## Ukulele for Idiots

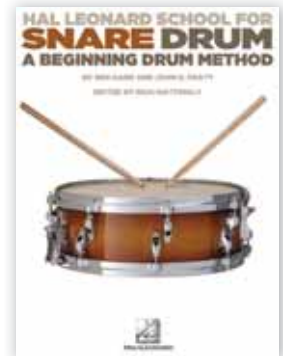
The Complete Idiot's Guide's latest title, *Playing The Ukulele*, covers everything beginners need to know to get started on the uke. Readers will learn how to strum, fingerpick, play different genres, play in a band and tune. Plus, the book teaches where and what kind of ukulele to buy. [idiotsguides.com](http://idiotsguides.com)



HAL LEONARD | SNARE DRUM METHOD

## Rhythmic Vocabulary

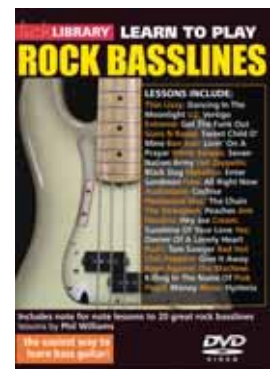
The new *Hal Leonard School For Snare Drum* method book is designed to help drummers develop rhythmic vocabulary and musical artistry. It presents fundamentals in a non-intimidating way and will also appeal to experienced snare drummers. MSRP: \$12.99. [halleonard.com](http://halleonard.com)



LICK LIBRARY | BASS INSTRUCTION

## Classic Bottom End

Lick Library's new *Learn To Play Rock Basslines* walks the user through some of the most famous bass parts in music history. The high-quality DVD lessons are ideal for beginners through to intermediate players. [licklibrary.com](http://licklibrary.com)





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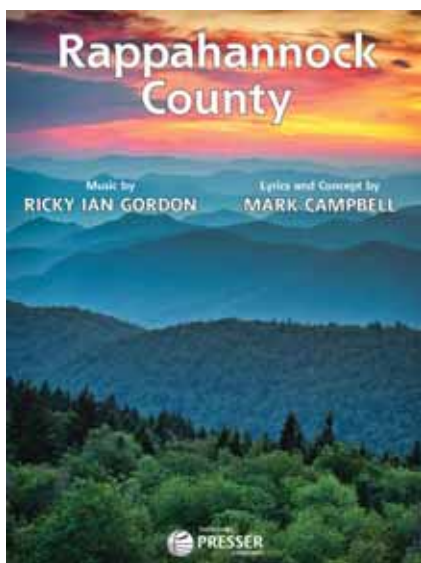
[www.mhopus.org](http://www.mhopus.org)



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## Holiday Cheer

AIM Gifts' new ornaments bring holiday spirit to music lovers. With more than 60 different designs, the ornaments range from guitar, trumpet, piano, violin, G-clef and drum set designs. **{aimgifts.com}**



THEODORE PRESSER | 'RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY'

## Civil War Songs

Theodore Presser recently released Ricky Ian Gordon's *Rappahannock County*, a piano-vocal score with lyrics by Mark Campbell. The theatrical song cycle captures key emotional, sociological and historical moments in the Civil War. MSRP: \$40. **{presser.com}**

KENDOR | 'RELAXED HAND TECHNIQUE'

## Relaxed Technique

Kendor Music has collaborated with Roy Burns to publish *Relaxed Hand Technique*. It's full of exercises and practice suggestions to help drummers achieve a more relaxed technique in all styles, so they can play with higher speed, power, endurance and finesse. The book is suitable for new drummers and experienced performers who want to fine-tune their skills. MSRP: \$22.95. **{kendormusic.com}**



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American DJ now offers the power to create bright RGB color washes without the need for power connections. The new Mega Go Bar50 and Mega Go Par64 battery-powered LED color-mixing fixtures will hold a charge and work at full force for eight hours. MAP: \$199 each. [americandj.com](http://americandj.com)



HERCULES | DJCONSOLE RMX 2

## Herculean Controller

Hercules has debuted the DJConsole RMX 2 controller, the successor to the company's DJConsole RMX. The unit delivers high-quality sound with a high-resolution 96-kHz, 24-bit audio interface for Windows and Mac. Along with a rugged metal case, the controller features a comprehensive set of audio outputs and inputs, as well as ultra-precise controls. It comes with DJ software apps DJuced 40 degrees and VirtualDJ 8 LE. MSRP: \$299.99. [hercules.com](http://hercules.com)



CHAUVET DJ | MEGA TRIX

## Mega Effects

Chauvet DJ recently rolled out Mega Trix, a mobile LED-powered effect light. It features crisp optics that project mid-air aerial effects, sharp beams of light and animations that flow across any surface. The compact, lightweight unit comes equipped with three independent pods that house 192 RGBW LEDs. An internal mounting option allows for quick, easy mounting to most tripods and speaker stands without interfering with speakers or other fixtures. [chauvetlighting.com](http://chauvetlighting.com)



Q LIGHTING | MICRO PLS LED

## Instant Light Show

Q Lighting's new Micro PLS LED Personal Light Show delivers light from red, amber, blue and white 1-watt LEDs for six hours on a full charge. Add on the included light diffusers to create a blended wash effect, or mix and match, leaving the white as a spot and filter the colors. The unit weighs only 17 ounces and can operate free of an outlet. [q-lighting.com](http://q-lighting.com)



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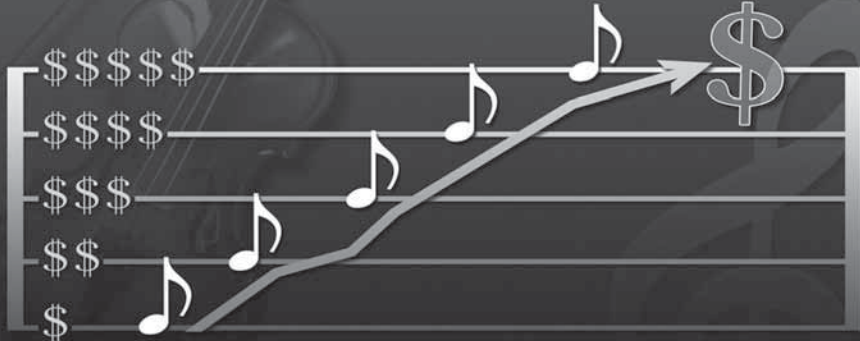
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**Donovan Bankhead**

Springfield Music  
Springfield, Mo.

The history with Amazon has been that once a product has a market, Amazon aims to become a dealer. So as a short-term benefit, you can jump on and make some money. It helps to promote dealers and their businesses. What you have to do is make sure you still have a level of engagement with customers and give them an experience that makes it worth the hassle of coming to the store. We try to have good-looking stores that are well-stocked. If you don't do that, people will find it easier to go to Amazon versus in-store shopping. There are two different categories of Amazon dealers. One category would be more startups that have the time to invest in something like that — someone who tries to move product for short-term gain. The other side is people who are very focused on e-commerce and online sales in general. There are some independent retailers where that's their model. They're not trying to build a neighborhood business or a local business. They're just trying to build an online business. They're not worried about what business is going to be like a year or three years from now. They're just going day by day.



**Sean Drysdale**

Mid-Michigan Music  
Midland, Mich.

Amazon isn't necessarily a threat. When it comes to Amazon, it's independent sellers and not authorized music dealers, so we treat it as such. We use eBay as a seller instead. As far as marketing goes, it's actually more legit, whereas with Amazon you can post anything you want. A lot of people utilize Amazon to do tax evasion. We'd rather do things so that when people do business with us, they're talking directly to us rather than to some third-party individual. There's a lot of that with Amazon. That's why they've been in a lot of hot water lately. It's why states are going to be passing laws that affect people who shop on Amazon. I'd say 30 percent of our sales are generated through eBay, though most of our gross profits obviously come from our sales floor and our salesmen.



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

# How do you use Amazon.com?

Amazon is the very best at what it does, and that is running an online warehouse. Whether it's connecting affiliates or stocking the product itself, Amazon does everything it can to make sure the product gets where it's supposed to go in a very short period of time. It's raised the consumer-expectation level extremely high.

With that praise, Amazon also hurts dealers as far as challenging the concept of MAP policies goes. I don't know how much time I have to spend encouraging my manufacturers to enforce their MAP or pointing out where MAP is being violated. In the world of smartphones, if

somebody scans a product with their phone, it doesn't matter what the difference is. It makes us look as if we're pricing too high.

When challenged, we educate the customer as to why our prices are sound. We won't price match, but we'll use Amazon as a tool to show what can realistically be done. If a customer believes he or she has a lower price somewhere, we'll do a value-added discount. Sometimes, we'll meet them in the middle, but generally speaking, we just enforce our prices.

I tried the online marketplace two years ago, and it did not work for me. It can work to a degree for dealers that are good at

it. With us, we're a family business, and nobody wants to sit at a computer and upload images and answer silly customer questions. It's hard enough for one of us to go on eBay and sell old stuff. You've got to have a person who's not just trained for it but fit for it. What makes a music store special is the owner has the drive to come in and make it a special experience for everybody involved. You have to have a unique skill set to sell on the computer. You have to have a staff that's dedicated to it in order to do it right, somebody who knows what kind of pictures to take, how to write descriptions and how to answer questions.





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## EXPANDING ITS VERSATILITY.

The Q2HD features an analog Mic Gain wheel that allows you to dial in the perfect amount of gain for any recording application. It also functions as the world's first USB microphone with Mid-Side miking capabilities.

## MORE TIME AND SPACE.

With a 2GB SD card, you can record over 40 minutes of stunning HD video. The Q2HD will accept up to 64GB SDXC cards for an incredible 15 hours of HD movie making.

**Zoom Q2HD Handy Video Recorder.**  
Brilliant Stereo Recording and HD Video...  
Now with Live Streaming.