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FOR PROGRESSIVE MUSIC RETAILERS

DECEMBER 2012
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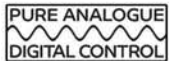
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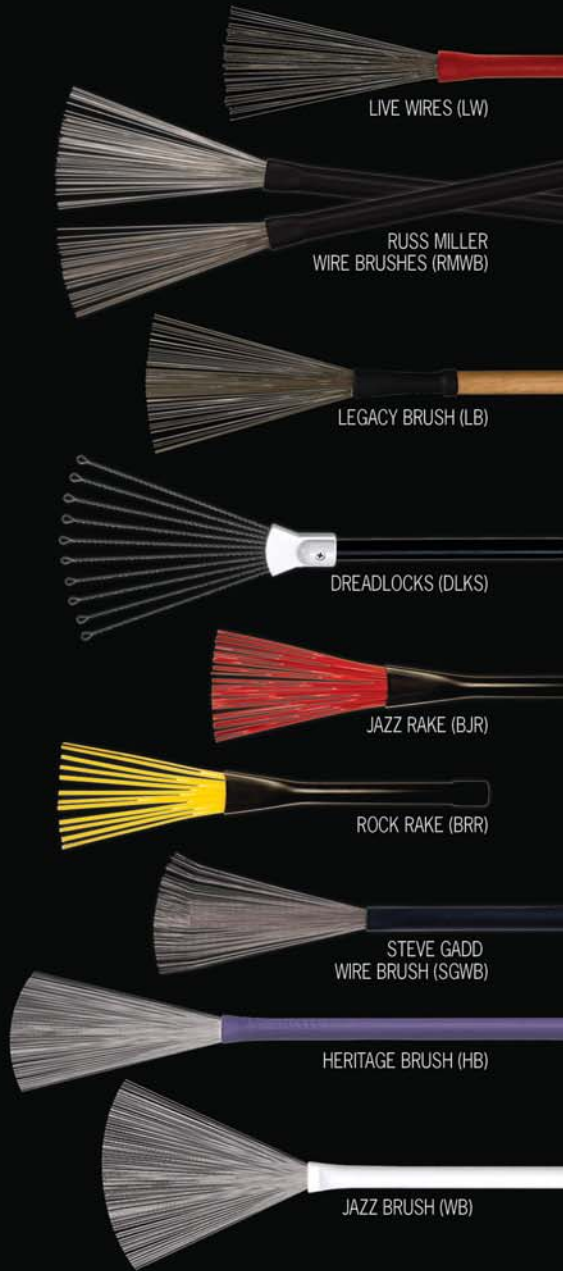
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Steve Smith with his Signature Tala Wands

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Photo by Daniel Shea

Chicago Music Exchange's David Katz

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PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY DAVID ZIVAN

WHAT ENDURES

Change—ain't nothin' stays the same.

— D. L. ROTH

That sure sounds right, doesn't it? Back in 1996, when I joined the staff of this magazine for the first time, email was a novelty. I didn't have a cell phone, and neither did you, probably. MARS Music had risen over the horizon, and some observers (myself included) thought that the big box model might just be the only way for MI retailers to thrive.

And now, I wonder what we did at the office before there were emails to answer. A friend of mine locks and unlocks her house with her phone (it's the same one she uses to pay for groceries). And the fate of MARS proved that a business built too quickly and carelessly can get crushed under its own gravity. Change is a constant.

Still, as I have spent the past few weeks getting reacquainted with the industry, what has struck me most are those things which haven't changed at all. Our Retailer of the Year, Sweetwater Music in Indiana, is a new kind of business, to be sure — one significantly enabled by advances in technology on multiple fronts. When customers call in, sophisticated software informs staff about what they have purchased in the past, and what they might be looking for in the future. They can suggest proper accessories and other add-on sales of all sorts. And logistics? Don't get me started. The company just plain executes.

While e-tailing always sounds a little hands-off, the fact is, what Sweetwater is doing is delivering great customer service, in the way that customers want it delivered. And it gets more old-fashioned than that. When we asked owner Chuck Surack the key to his success, his response was that he operates his business by the principles he learned as a Boy Scout.

Now you and I might have more of a rock 'n' roll lifestyle than that — but there is no denying that staying true to his core principles has brought Surack enormous success. That's the lesson I took away from all our Retail Excellence Award winners this year. Change matters. It happens. But don't forget the path that got you there. Don't forget the details.

Speaking of which: I'm indebted to my predecessor, Zach Phillips, who worked at this magazine for more than a decade before his recent move to NAMM. When I say that he and the rest of the staff here have built a great magazine, it's not empty puffery: They have the 2012 Magazine of the Year award — an Azbee, from the American Society of Business Press Editors — to prove it. I hope we win that again — something we can achieve only by staying relevant to our readers' business life. Don't hesitate to let me know how we might do that better in the upcoming year. I'm hoping, as Mr. Roth also once put it, to hit the ground running. **MI**

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LETTERS

Contemporary Music Center Rocks On

We at Contemporary Music Center would like to thank *Music Inc.* for the November 2012 cover story “The King of Rock Camp.”

Many people have shared their accolades with me over how well-written the article was, and I couldn't agree more. I would personally like to thank Zach Phillips for his exemplary work not only with this article but for his years at the helm of the *Music Inc.* editor's desk.

Without the support of our manufacturers and NAMM, Rock Camp would have turned out very differently. Roland, Bedell, Epiphone, Pearl, Zildjian, JamHub and the Support Music Coalition all contributed toward this event. It was a moment where everyone came together for the common good of the community.

NAMM's Jennifer Paisley emceeding the event gave our families an inside glimpse as to why School Jam is one of the country's top teen programs.

Finally, I'd like to thank everyone in the industry who has taken time out of their busy schedules to congratulate us.

The music business in general should be proud of what was accomplished and the simple reason is because students were able to make music in front of a packed house, receive thunderous applause, and take a bow. It doesn't get any better than that.

Menzie Pittman
Contemporary Music Center
Haymarket, Va.

Jordan Kitt's Thanks its Supporters

I would like to thank Frank, Zach and Katie for the article regarding our 100th anniversary the



in November issue of *Music Inc.*

I appreciate your thoughtful comments on the history of the company, last year's transition and the progress we have made since.

The celebration marking the anniversary at Strathmore Mansion in Rockville, Md., was a fun evening for everyone and it gave my co-owner Ray Fugere and I the opportunity to thank the many people who've helped support Jordan Kitt's over the years. We appreciate all the folks from Yamaha, Roland and Mason & Hamlin (PianoDisc) who attended the celebration event, as well as the “old-timers” who were an important part of the company in the past. It was like a family reunion.

We were also able to acknowl-

edge our current employees who, as a team, will continue working hard to make the company what it is in the future.

Here's to the next 100!

Chris Syllaba
Jordan Kitt's
Rockville, Md.

A Manufacturer's Point of View

In response to Myrna Sislen's November 2012 column, “Price Properly or Perish,” I would like to say I feel the 50-percent margin she refers to in the piece only works on new, small ticket items.

Our dealers make a 40-point margin, and they make well more than two times what we make on any given instrument. Out of that, we then spend a small fortune on advertising and marketing to try to drive business to

our dealers. In order to be competitive in the marketplace we try to keep street pricing low for the consumer. That cost comes out of our margin. The dealers' margin remains constant.

I have many knowledgeable dealers in my network that do a great job at presenting and selling my instruments to their customers.

In order to eliminate the us/them—manufacturer/dealer relationship, we try to set up situations where we work together with our dealer network through training, in-store appearances, co-advertising campaigns, and any other ideas I may be presented with.

Ken Haas
General Manager
Reverend Guitars

A Dealer's Response

In regards to Sislen's November 2012 column I would like to say, “Bravo.”

The big boys, such as Musician's Friend and Guitar Center, keep us at way too short of margins. At my store, Route 60 Music in Barboursville, W.V., we ask how can we compete and still have pricing credibility? If you want true small businesses to hire people and offer benefits we must be allowed to make enough to do so.

Thanks to Sislen for her insight. I will be more like her when considering new products from here on out.

Paul Callicoat
Route 60 Music
Barboursville, W.V.

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RETAIL

GUITAR STOP | BY MARTHA SPIZZIRI

GUITAR STOP KEEPS GOING

Guitar Stop just celebrated its 50th year of selling guitars — but it almost didn't become a music store at all. Founder Edward Oster, father of current owner Jeanne Oster, had a driving school, then started selling insurance, and eventually switched to selling used office equipment. One day in 1962, someone brought an Aria guitar into the store and Edward bought it on a whim. Soon, used musical instruments became a significant part of the business. "He was referred to as 'Fast Eddie,' because the deals were so fast," Jeanne Oster said. "Somebody would come in and sell you a guitar, and before the guy even left the store, somebody else was handing you twice as much money to take it away."

Edward died in 1986, and Jeanne, who had worked in the store almost continuously from the age of 10, took over the operation. In 1987, she moved the shop to a more affluent area and started selling mostly new guitars. The store's diminutive size forced her to edit inventory carefully. Today, the 500-square-foot shop in Cambridge, Mass., carries a narrow selection of brands, including Squier, Fender, Ibanez, Gretsch, Guild and Takamine, most priced under \$1,000. Oster



Edward Oster in the early days of the shop; Inset: Guitar Stop today.

also recently started selling ukuleles and nylon-string Cordoba classical guitars.

SMART LESSONS

The operation strives to provide any service a guitarist might want, including repair work, and has a strong print music business. "It definitely brings people in," Oster said. But in recent years, the store's lessons program has become a focus. "We could almost survive on lessons alone,

which is nice," said Oster, who estimated lessons now represent 40 percent of the store's gross income. Five teachers, who are independent contractors, use small rooms downstairs from the retail space. Guitar Stop offers private lessons, workshops and group classes, including regularly scheduled "Kid's Jams" for ages 9–15. (Lessons cost \$22.50 for a half-hour and \$45 for an hour; the group jams cost \$240 for eight one-hour sessions.)

"[The lesson program] takes so much pressure off the sales," Oster said. "If I sell a music lesson, I pay the teacher a percentage, I get a percentage. I don't have to replace anything." And customers

who come in for lessons might need strings, a setup or a new instrument. Accessories represent about 20 percent of gross sales, according to Oster.

The classes enjoy a built-in clientele since the store caters primarily to beginners and intermediate players. And because the shop is only a few miles from the prestigious Berklee School of Music, Oster and her sister, Joanne, who runs the lesson program, can recruit teachers from the school. That's probably the biggest factor in the success of the program. "The students really like the teachers," Oster said. "Of course, if you don't have a good teacher, it doesn't really matter about anything else."

Though there's competition from Berklee students who give private lessons, Oster said that issue is offset both by the fact that Berklee is a source of teachers for the store, and by the shop's stringent requirements for its instructors.

"For us to even interview

a teacher, they have to have a degree in music,” she said. “They have to have five years’ minimum experience teaching in a structured situation. They can’t just say, ‘Oh, I taught somebody in my basement.’ And they have to be playing professionally.”

The lessons program receives numerous word-of-mouth referrals due to the quality of the instruction and thrives, in part, because students don’t have to make a big financial outlay.

“The only commitment the student has is a security deposit of one lesson,” Oster said. “We have one day’s cancellation notice, or they have to pay for the time reserved. They pay for each lesson as they take it. They’re only committing to one lesson at a time, although the majority of our students do take [lessons] for quite a long time.” Students who prepay for a 12-lesson “pack” get a 10-percent discount.

ONLINE EVOLUTION

On fliers, Oster often highlights the instructors’ resumes, and she promotes the lessons mostly through her website and social media. The company first launched its site in 1996, an early entry that Oster said keeps the store high up in Google searches. The fact that the Guitar Stop site has more than 500 pages doesn’t hurt search-engine rankings either. “We change the site daily if something comes in,” she said. “If something goes out, we update it.” Oster doesn’t take search-engine rankings for granted, and makes sure the site incorporates strong keywords, a title for each page, a site map and other characteristics that keep the shop near the top.

Oster says she’s able to price her merchandise competitively with other online vendors, though she’s felt the bite of Amazon, especially in replacement parts such as pickups, pots, screws and pickguards. Shops selling on Amazon now come up ahead of Guitar Stop in web searches for those items. Oster opts not to sell on the site. “Before [Amazon began selling music gear] we were shipping out 30 percent of our monthly gross,” Oster said. “And now we’re shipping out, maybe, 2 percent.” But she added that her gross annual income increases every year, and she attributed that growth partly to the Web. “People are finding my site and my gear on the net, but

they’re coming in to buy it,” she explained.

In the end, Oster attributes her success not so much to any one specific action, but to constant vigilance toward what’s going on — changing technology, shifts in the marketplace and evolving customer demands. It’s a philosophy she learned from her father, who morphed his business from a driving school to an insurance agency

and then again, to a used-equipment store. “He was a great businessman, because he saw opportunities and took advantage of them,” said Oster. “There are lots of people who don’t see the opportunities, and then there are people who see the opportunities but don’t do anything about it. The great business people are the ones who see the opportunities and act on them.” **MI**

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Gilbert plays

SAM ASH MUSIC | CLINIC

SAM ASH HOSTS 80s ICON

legendary shredder Paul Gilbert made a rare clinic appearance in August at Sam Ash Music's Las Vegas location. The guitarist, perhaps best known for his work with Racer X and Mr. Big, helped draw a large crowd to the 31,000-square-foot location.

Sponsored by Ibanez, the nearly two-hour event showcased two signature models from the manufacturer. Gilbert played with area bassist Craig Martini as well as Al Vetere, percussion product manager at Sam Ash Music Corp. "The guy clearly just loves to play," said Vetere, who backed Gilbert on a Tama Starclassic Performer B/B drum kit. "Paul is a very passionate musician."

Gilbert performed a whimsical selection of rock classics, kick-

ing off the event with a medley of ZZ Top's "Waiting For The Bus" and "Jesus Left Chicago." He refrained from playing tunes from his own catalog, opting instead for an eclectic set list that included the Joe Walsh classic, "Rocky Mountain Way," Stevie Wonder's "Living For The City," and "What A Fool Believes," by Michael McDonald.

Throughout the event, Gilbert spoke about his inspirations and technique, and answered questions from the audience. Attendees heard Gilbert speak on the importance of keeping time with the foot.

Mike Aurigemma, director of Merchandising and Special Projects for Sam Ash, made a special point of helping with the clinic's production. "Being myself a refugee of the '80s, I think Paul Gilbert is one of the finest



Gilbert (above) drew a big crowd in Vegas.

guitar players on the planet," he said. "Al and Craig did an amazing job backing Paul up. It sounded like they had played together before which was not the case. They learned the songs in the green room about an hour before they went on. We collectively pulled off one of the best if not the best clinic in the history of the company."

Also in attendance was Sam-

my Ash, COO at Sam Ash, who agreed with Aurigemma's assessment — and who was quick to throw some kazoos on stage when Gilbert mentioned that he sometimes likes to compose solos and melodies on the instrument. "I still get chills from what I saw and how it went down," Ash said. "This was possibly one of the greatest clinics we have ever had."



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The Beat Goes On

In October, Stebal Drums of Wil-
lowick, Ohio, sponsored The Big
Beat, an annual charity drum-
ming event. It was the second
year in a row the store organized
the fundraiser, which was held at
a high school gym in the Cleve-
land suburb of Mentor, Ohio.

Since 2008, the Big Beat,
which attempts to achieve the
greatest number of drummers
playing the same beat at the
same time, has been sponsored
by Five-Star percussion dealers
throughout North America. Funds
raised go to The Mr. Holland’s
Opus Foundation. Stebal Drums
has raised \$30,000 since 2008.

Tom Shelley, president of
Universal Percussion, donned
a skeleton suit and performed
several songs, including a ren-
dition of “Gangnam Style.”

Universal Percussion do-
nated \$1,000 in gear to be
raffled at the event.

“The whole thing went even
better than expected,” Shelley said.
“We had more than 100 drum-
mers on the floor, and I brought the
kids up on stage at the end, and
showed them maracas, claves, and
timbales. Maybe it will get some
more kids interested in drumming.”



Shelley played a huge rig



COWTOWN GUITARS | SALE

COWTOWN PUTS IT IN PARK

“PARK(ing) Day” is described on its website as “an annual worldwide event where artists, designers and citizens transform ... parking spots into temporary public parks.” On at least one stretch of sidewalk in downtown Las Vegas this past September, that meant a residency by the Gibson Guitars bus in front of Cowtown Guitars.

“A lot of people in Vegas did it,” said Roxie Amoroso, who co-owns the shop with her husband, Jesse. “The idea is that you take over metered spaces — we have those in front of our shop. There was sort of a street fair behind us — kids running around, people on the sidewalks with beers, food trucks.”

Along with plenty of fun, the store also saw a good bit of foot traffic, helped in part by the presence of Rick Harrison, from the popular *Pawn Stars* TV show. Jesse serves as the program’s guitar expert when the pawn shop is trying to provide a valuation on an instrument.

“We had a lot of really great vintage stuff out and playable,” Roxie said. “One that sold was one of the guitars on display, a ’64 White Epiphone Crestwood Custom. Anytime we stay open later we take advantage of it.”



Co-owner Jesse Amoroso and reality star Rick Harrison

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LARRY'S MUSIC CENTER | COMMUNITY

LARRY'S MUSIC KEEPS A PROMISE

Larry's Music Center, a two-location company with stores in Wooster and Millersburg, Ohio, recently kept a tweeted promise to a longtime customer. The customer was Josh Krajcik, who reached the finals on the *X Factor* TV show.

"Josh was a local guitar player," said store manager Gabriel O'Brien. "He grew up in Wooster, and he taught here for a couple of years. He bought a lot of guitars here over the years — and his Dad bought a guitar here over the summer." The store owner's wife was once Krajcik's piano teacher.

Store staff tweeted that if Krajcik won, they would give him a Fender American Standard Stratocaster. Krajcik was the runner-up — but the store made the gift anyway.



GUITAR CENTER | PERSONNEL

Trojan Leaves Guitar Center

Gregory Trojan has left his post as Guitar Center CEO to join BJ's Restaurants, a 127-store, casual-dining chain headquartered in Huntington Beach, Calif.

BJ's announced that Trojan will join the company as president and a director effective Dec. 3. Gerald W. Deitchle, the company's current chairman, president and CEO will retire as CEO effective Feb. 1, 2013, and Trojan will succeed him in that role. Deitchle will continue as chairman of the company's board of directors.

In 2007, Trojan joined Guitar Center Holdings, Inc., the privately held retailer of music products with annual revenue in excess of \$2 billion. Guitar Center currently operates 232 Guitar Center stores in 43 states and 109 Music & Arts stores in 22 states. Trojan initially joined GC as president and chief operating officer and a director. He became CEO in November 2010.

Prior to GC, Trojan served as CEO of



House of Blues Entertainment and of California Pizza Kitchen, and held various positions within PepsiCo. Earlier in his career, Trojan was a consultant at Bain & Company and Arthur Andersen & Co. Trojan, 53, and his family currently reside in the Los Angeles area.

"BJ's has cultivated a truly unique concept in the casual dining space," Trojan said in a press release. "I look forward to bringing BJ's great food and service to many more guests and markets to come."

Trojan signed a five-year contract with the chain with a base salary of \$850,000 annually. In addition, he will receive a \$350,000 signing bonus, an annual bonus of no less than 80 percent of his salary and stock options — with an approximate value of \$3.75 million — during the course of his contract.

At press time, GC had made no announcement on a successor to Trojan.



"We appreciate Anthem's internet and territorial policies..."

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Note from Joe **Thank You**

It's the last month of the year and hopefully a busy time for our NAMM Member retailers, with holiday sales peaking between Thanksgiving and New Year's. And, just as dealers scramble to meet the needs of their customers, manufacturers are busy making last-minute holiday shipments and readying their new products for debut at the upcoming NAMM Show. While this was yet another challenging year for many NAMM Members, perhaps now is a fitting time to recognize some of the reasons we have to be thankful.

In my retail past, this was the season we'd go extra lengths to thank those who shopped with us throughout the year, parents who brought their kids in for lessons, music teachers who worked closely with us, vendors who supplied us with the right products and programs, and, perhaps most importantly, our staff who made "all the trains run on time."

So in that spirit, we'd like to thank you, our Members, for all you've done for the association this year. So many of you have given generously of your time and talents that it's tough to know where to begin.

I'll start with the 29 incredible individuals who make up our Board of Directors and Executive Committee, businesspeople volunteering their time and energy to improve the association and the industry for all. To the current Board and the hundreds of Board alumni who remain close friends, we are grateful for your continued leadership.

Nearly every NAMM Member company from around the world came to one of our shows this past year. Thank you to our exhibitors for bringing their best ideas to market at the shows, to our buyers who came to plan their purchases and strengthen their relationships with vendors, and to the NAMM U speakers who volunteered their time and ideas. The NAMM Show is your show, and we're grateful for your trust in us to continue providing this service to the industry. A big thank you also goes out to our partners who helped us produce the best trade shows possible. It takes thousands of people working long hours before the show opens to provide

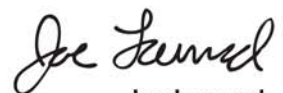
a safe, efficient and productive environment for our Members and their guests.

In addition, we'd like to express our sincere appreciation to all the NAMM Members who've worked diligently to strengthen music education. Many made the trip to Washington for the annual Advocacy Fly-In, and Members in communities all around the world used market development programs to create more music makers locally. Because of you, school music programs have been strengthened and saved. As a result, hundreds of thousands of students picked up an instrument for the first time. Thank you to the many national arts organizations that lobbied for music education with us, and to our Members who worked tirelessly on regulatory reform for intellectual property, health insurance and environmental issues.

This past year, your NAMM staff worked diligently and creatively to assist and represent you, and I would personally like to recognize this dedicated team. It's an honor to work with them to serve this great industry.

Thank you for everything you do every day to bring music into the lives of your community. We are all so lucky to be in an industry that provides joy and meaning to the world.

Happy holidays,



Joe Lamond
NAMM PRESIDENT AND CEO

NAME NAMM News December No. 2012

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- > **PreSonus**
Holds annual PreSonuSphere
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Distributes Shadow Electronics
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Offers employees free violin lessons
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SUPPLY

From left: Anthrax's Scott Ian, bassist Billy Sheehan, Slayer's Kerry King, Pantera's Philip Anselmo, Slayer's Dave Lombardo and Gary Holt, Anthrax's Charlie Benante and Frank Bello with Samson's Mark Menghi (bottom center)



SAMSON | BY HILARY BROWN

MAKING THE BRAND

Patrons expecting a traditional music workshop at New York's Gramercy Theatre were in for a rude awakening on Sept. 7.

Hordes of sweaty music fans in ripped jeans, leather jackets

and Iron Maiden t-shirts head-banged in unison as heavy-metal luminaries shredded through their most famous, face-melting riffs. Samson Technologies' Metal Masters 4 — a unique clinic that fuses music school with mosh pit — is the stale guitar lesson's

welcome ass-kicking.

"People are starting to recognize how we're taking the 'clinic' to a whole new level," said Samson Director of Marketing Mark Menghi.

Menghi is the tattooed, business-savvy architect behind the

Metal Masters blueprint: Heavy-metal alumni of bands such as Slayer, Pantera and Anthrax pilot a full-fledged educational workshop-slash-jam session, all while simultaneously promoting Samson, Hartke and Zoom gear.

"The clinics I do solo are

mostly Q&A and signing,” said clinician and Anthrax guitarist Scott Ian. “Metal Masters is a full-blown concert!”

But beneath MM4’s epic end-product is a meticulously executed brand-recognition initiative. Like any concert, Metal Masters survives on artist loyalty and a diligent crew — and this year, Samson has tapped a rather unexpected collaborator.

ARTIST ENDORSEMENT

In February 2011, Menghi received a phone call from former Dream Theater drummer Mike Portnoy that directly inspired Metal Masters 1. Portnoy had seen online video clips of the clinic in its embryonic stages — modest in-store events at Sam Ash in Manhattan and former Boston retailer Daddy’s Junky Music — and wanted to come on board. But at the official trial run at Sam Ash’s Cerritos, Calif., location, the turnout generated by Portnoy and his fellow clinicians was unprecedented.

“There were hundreds of kids,” Menghi said. “People were moshing in the store — but gear was being sold. It was really about getting people into music stores in the tough economy.”

Portnoy is a prime example of how Metal Masters is promoted with the rock ‘n’ roll mentality in mind: It thrives off the underground buzz incited by Samson’s trusted stable of endorsers. That grassroots promotion, said founding Metal Masters clinician, Anthrax bassist Frank Bello, resonates with legions of rabid fans.

“Samson, Hartke and Zoom understand how loyal the metal audience is,” Bello said. “The metal audience is smart. They know that metal players want to use the best gear that works for them, so it works for everybody.”

Branding and product place-



Clockwise, from left: Sirius/XM Satellite Radio’s Jose Manglin (left) and Menghi; Samson’s David Hakim, Metal Masters Booking Agent Mike Monterulo, Menghi, Samson’s Jack Knight and Hartke Systems’ Larry Hartke; Anthrax guitarist Scott Ian instructs a fan; Metal Masters 4 final concert.



ment — not to mention, tons of Samson swag — are vital to the Metal Masters enterprise, Menghi explained.

“We consider this advertising,” he said. “Every kid that walks out not only gets the experience, but also drumheads, posters, picks ... We make sure everyone walks out of the building with something.”

He added that the show was even streamed live on the Web via one of Samson’s hottest new products, the Zoom Q2HD Recorder. “A lot of our gear is not visible, so we’re letting people know that there’s so much more than a guitar and an amplifier. There’s microphone stands, effects pedals — all kinds of stuff.”

GUEST COLLABORATORS

At MM4, it wasn’t just the heavy-metal who’s-who that drew crowds. It was also

the crew behind the scenes that contributed to the event’s marketing strategy. One of the major power players was Guitar Center, who co-sponsored the event. It’s the first time that Samson and GC have ever shared a stage as sponsorship partners, and Menghi refers to the promising potential of the GC and Samson promotional team as a “double-headed dragon.”

“Guitar Center has a killer marketing department,” said Menghi, who added that GC had expertly controlled an MM4 meet-and-greet at the big box’s Union Square location the day before. “I’ve never seen a signing coordinated like that. You have eight guys sitting at a signing table. You’re thinking it’s going to be a mess, but it was the complete opposite — very professional.”

Samson also took a multi-

pronged approach with its limited-but-effective public-relations campaign, tapping metal mag *Revolver* and Jägermeister as fellow collaborators. It also promoted MM4 through GC and *Revolver*’s highly visible Facebook pages.

“Our organizers were spot-on,” Menghi said. “From *FUSE* to *Rolling Stone* ... the interest level of the press was amazing.”

And the performers agree that, compared to years past, MM4 was the most fluid production of the bunch. “It felt very ‘pro’ from the point of view of running it like a show,” Ian said.

But whether its amping up the talent or bringing the show straight to Times Square — as was the case with MM2 — Menghi always tries to take next year’s event up to 11. In metal, after all, it’s bigger, louder and faster that matter. **MI**

AP INTERNATIONAL | WEB

AP Now Offered on ProActive Network

AP International recently joined ProActive website's e-commerce network. This means that dealers can now get a new website preloaded with all authorized products from all of AP's lines.

Dealers may fill orders from their own stock or upload the order to AP International for drop-shipping. **{apintl.com}**

AUDIO-TECHNICA | ARTIST APPROVED

Audio-Technica Keeps it Real in *Treme*

The New Orleans-based HBO TV series *Treme* features many scenes where music is recorded on site during filming. The show's music recordist,

Robert C. Bigelow, chose Audio-Technica micro-phones to capture the show's tunes.

Bigelow said Audio-Technica gives him the

ability to capture a huge palette of sound using just a few mics. Some of the mics he uses include the A-T BP4027 and BP4029 Stereo Shotgun.

"They're incredibly versatile and I'll use them on instruments from a trombone to a piano," he said. "They're very easy to hide — unlike other clip-on mics." **{audio-technica.com}**



Clinician Craig Anderson leads a seminar

PRESONUS | EVENT

PRESONUSPHERE DRAWS A CROWD

PreSonus held its PreSonuSphere 2012 on Sept. 28–29 at the Shaw Center for the Arts in Baton Rouge, La. The second annual user conference brought 481 musicians, producers, engineers and professionals together, nearly tripling the attendance of the 2011 event. "PreSonuSphere 2012 was a great opportunity for us to listen to our customers, as well as to help them better solve their live-sound and record-

ing challenges using our products," said Jim Mack, PreSonus CEO.

The event included performances by The Michael Foster Project and Papa Grows Funk. Seminars included Breakfast with the Chiefs, a panel discussion featuring PreSonus executives and staff offering tips and techniques for the company's StudioLive digital mixers and Studio One music-production software. **{presonus.com}**

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— Valentina Jotovic — Hunterdon Academy of the Arts

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HOHNER | WEB

Hohner Launches New Websites

Hohner recently overhauled its global network of websites. The new sites offer such features as video workshops and tutorials for harmonica service, a harmonica customizing section, artist videos, free harmonica lessons and interactive galleries.

"We've been planning this website upgrade for quite some time," said Scott Emmerman, director of marketing and sales. "This new website gives us more tools and much greater capabilities with which to promote our brands." **{playhohner.com}**

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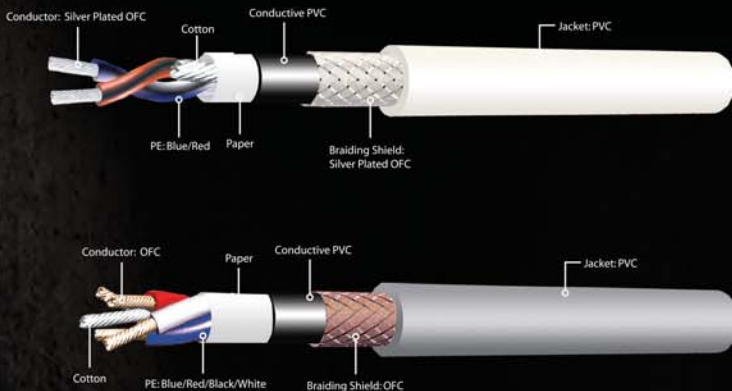
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- 1/4" mono plug to 1/4" mono plug
- SPOFC conductor
- PE insulation
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- Outer Diameter 8mm
- Ultra flexible outer PVC jacket



MPQ-270G /GA

MPQ-270G /GA

- 20AWG four-conductor microphone cable
- XLR male to XLR female
- OFC conductor
- PE insulation
- Conductive PVC
- OFC braided shielding with 95% coverage
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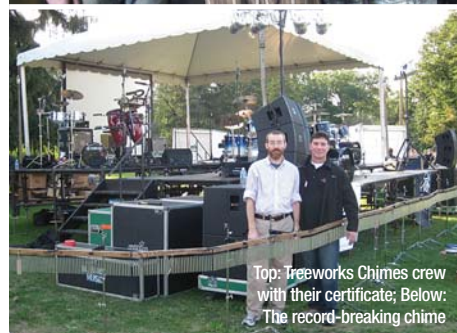
THE MUSIC LINK | DISTRIBUTION

TML PARTNERS WITH SHADOW

The Music Link is now distributing Shadow Electronics products in the United States. In addition to specialized pickups, Shadow Electronics also builds the E-Tuner, a humbucker frame tuner.

“Recognizing that electronic accessories bring high margins to dealers, and that players are

always seeking the latest technology, we saw an opportunity,” said Scott Thompson, vice president of sales for The Music Link. “We felt The Music Link could fill a market niche that would be a win-win for everyone by expanding the Shadow brand through our strong U.S. dealer network.” themusiclink.net



Top: Treeworks Chimes crew with their certificate; Below: The record-breaking chime

TREWORKS CHIMES | RECORD

TreeWorks Breaks Record

The Guinness Book of World Records officially certified that Nashville, Tenn.-based TreeWorks Chimes recently built the largest chime ever recorded. A collaborative effort between Mitch McMichen of TreeWorks Chimes and Tom Shelley of Universal Percussion, and the record was broken at Drum Fest — a Universal Percussion sponsored event in Columbiana, Ohio.

The record-breaking chime features 1,221 hand-tied chime bars and weighed in at about 140 pounds and more than 64-feet long. treeworkschimes.com

XCHANGE | WEB

Xchange Overhauls Site

Xchange Market Platform has launched its new website, featuring a more visual and better reference for the software brands and titles available on the platform.

Xchange Market Platform is a point-of-sale activation system that enables software vendors to sell software licenses in the retail channel through a web portal. According to Xchange General Manager Paul Fattahi the platform helps reduce time, distance and costs associated with selling software in the retail space. xchangemarket.com

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D'ADDARIO | CHARITY

D'ADDARIO INSTRUCTS EMPLOYEES

The D'Addario Foundation, a non-profit committed to assisting music growth and appreciation, recently directed its efforts towards the home front by offering free violin lessons to D'Addario employees and their children.

The lessons are taught by D'Addario Bowed Product Manager Lyris Hung, who came up with the idea.

"I approached Suzanne D'Addario (who runs the Founda-

tion) about the idea of providing rental instruments," Hung said. "She immediately approved, saying that this project was very much in line with the type of things that the Foundation loves to support."

Hung has been teaching the lessons since April and plans on having a special performance in December. On average, she teaches between 2-4 students at one time.

"I've always had a passion for



Lyris Hung (left) teaches D'Addario violin students

education and believe that learning music of any kind enriches a child's development," she said.

Hung also said she originally decided to start the program to help bring more music into the lives of the production personnel, especially with public schools cutting out music programs.

"I felt this was a vital time to

start something like this," she said. "Additionally, D'Addario has always been a family company and one that invests in its families, as well as a company heavily invested in music education. This lesson program, for me, combines both of those concepts into one package."

daddariofoundation.org

signal matters...



APPOINTMENTS

Harman Promotes Fitzgerald Head Head

Harman recently promoted John Fitzgerald to the position of vice president, general manager of the amplifiers and signal processing strategic business unit. The move follows the retirement of Rob Urry who served at Harman for more than 28 years.

“As we look back on Urry’s remarkable contribution to our organization and our industry, we also look forward to a new era of success under Fitzgerald,” said Blake Augsburger, president of Harman. “John is a proven leader with a demonstrated capacity to get results. For our customers and channel partners John’s leadership means we’ll have a high volume of exciting new products to show. For our organization it means we’ll have an excellent manager with great ideas and for other stakeholders this appointment is a signal of Harman’s intent to evolve and grow while respecting our roots and culture.”

Fitzgerald joined Harman in 1997 and has since been appointed to increasingly senior positions with customer-facing and operational responsibilities. harman.com



John Fitzgerald

Brown Nabs Executive Position at Five-Star

Pat Brown, principal at The Brown Group, has been named executive director of the Five-Star Group of independent drum shops.

Brown, whose background includes seven years at Fender and 27 years at Pro-Mark, is a former co-director of the Percussion Marketing Council and past winner of the Percussive Arts Society’s President’s Industry Award.

“Pat has been a fixture in the percussion industry for years,” said the Five-Star board when making the announcement. “He knows the vendors and the store owners and, most importantly, the percussion business. It’s a natural fit.” thebrowngroup.com



Pat Brown

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Right
PRICE
Right
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**RETAILER
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THE 2012

EXCELLENCE

AWARDS

BY FRANK ALKYER, HILARY BROWN, JEFF CAGLE, ED ENRIGHT,
KATIE KAILUS, ZACH PHILLIPS, DAVID WOLINSKY AND DAVID ZIVAN

Music Inc.'s 2012 Excellence Awards honor 10 retailers and 10 suppliers who have gone above and beyond this year, improving their businesses and their bottom lines. Voted on by their peers, these companies discuss their successes, as well as their tried-and-true strategies for running a better business. Learn from these stories, and take them with you into 2013.

Sweet Success

An e-commerce giant continues to grow, bringing old-fashioned service to a brave new world

When you ask Chuck Surack about the secret to his success, he'll tell you there's no secret.

"It's 'Do the right thing,'" said Surack, the founder and president of Sweetwater Sound, Fort Wayne, Ind. "I was in Boy Scouts, and I believe in what they teach. Scouts are trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, clean and reverent. Those are great philosophies for a teenager to live by. They're great philosophies to live in our personal life. And, frankly, they're great business philosophies."

While that approach provides a sturdy foundation, Surack and his staff nearly 500 employees have learned a thing or two since his Boy Scout days. The owner says that, in its 34 years in business, Sweetwater has never had a down year. Surack said Sweetwater is on track for 20–24 percent growth in 2012, which could mean sales of nearly \$250 million by year's end.

"I wish I could tell all the other retailers that there's a magic pill," he said. "I'm sure as we've gotten big, they say we have all these advantages. But it's really just focusing on the basics. It's blocking and tackling — focusing on every individual customer."

The Sweetwater model is unusual for U.S. musical products retailers. First, everything is done under one very large roof in Fort Wayne, operating from a 180,000-square-foot facility that was built six years ago. There, Sweetwater has a stunning brick-and-mortar

showroom that will deliver about \$6 million in sales for 2012, and one of the deepest e-commerce sites in the industry. But the bulk of the company's sales come as a direct result of 200 highly trained, well-paid sales engineers and managers. And a rich database of more than 2 million customers.

"I hear all the time, the advantages we have in not collecting sales tax, but I can also tell you I wrote a tax check that was \$2 million for a quarter," Surack said. "I have other expenses that local businesses don't have. Clearly I have some advantages, such as having a lot of people in one location and creating economies of scale. But frankly, with purchasing today, the vendors are very transparent and ethical, and I don't get quantity discounts they used to give. Maybe I save a little bit on shipping because I'm getting a pallet load, but the whole FTC investigation and all kinds of other things have made vendors pretty darned careful about making sure the prices they give are on a published price list."

While most of the industry retrenched during the recession, Sweetwater contin-

ues to expand. This year, the company broke ground on a \$24 million, 110,000-square-foot addition to its campus that will increase warehouse space and create room for more sales professionals. Each of the facility's three floors has room for about 350 sales people.

"You can do the math," he said. "We have room for a sales department of 1,050. I'm not saying we're going to equip those floors exactly the same way, but we wanted to build some expansion room in because every time I've built in the past, I haven't built enough."

Simply hiring more people doesn't drive sales, of course. Sweetwater puts each new sales engineer through a rigorous interview process, then a 13-week training period before they take or make their first call. The entire sales team receives training from 8–9 a.m. every Tuesday and Thursday. Employees who are not meeting minimum sales standards (the average Sweetwater sales engineer does well over \$1 million in sales annually) are given more training. As a result,

SWEETWATER SOUND

Fort Wayne, Ind.

PRINCIPALS
Chuck Surack

FOUNDED
1979

EMPLOYEES
500+

STORES
1

ANNUAL REVENUE
About \$250 million



turnover at the company is low and motivation is high.

Not waiting around for business is at the heart of that motivation.

“In our case, 82 percent of calls at Sweetwater are outgoing calls,” Surack said. “We drive the business because we have a relationship with the customer. It’s amazing, whether they’re surgeons, attorneys, accountants, or whatever, they’re in this because they love this. Doctors will take a break from surgery because they want to talk to their friend Steve, the Sweetwater sales engineer.

“Just like your local store knows every customer who comes in the store and knows what kind of instruments they have or don’t have or what their dreams or aspirations are, those are the kinds of things we do, too. We just do it on the telephone all the time and we have 150 sales folks developing personal relationships with anywhere from 2,000 to 5,000 or 6,000 customers. That’s where our advantage is.”

And that’s the true secret of success for the 2012 *Music Inc.* Retailer of the Year. —FA

Chuck Surack

Photo by Steve Vorderman

Film School

*Online videos build a
Chicago shop's fan base
— and its bottom line*

When David Kalt, the former CEO of online brokerage and trading firm optionsXpress, purchased Chicago Music Exchange two years ago, his first order of business was to upgrade the computer systems.

The 22-year-old Chicago dealership's cozy aesthetic and plentiful inventory already attracted a loyal high-end clientele. So rather than boost CME's product offerings, the self-proclaimed "technology guy" spearheaded a promising email-capture campaign. It was a baby step toward Kalt's ultimate goal: replicating the in-store experience on the Web.

"I already had a kick-ass shop," he said. "I'm trying to electronically connect to our customers in a very proactive way."

CME regularly produces a steady stream of online videos, from pedal demonstrations to restoration advice. All those efforts have incited a marketing bonanza that has helped Kalt expand his dealership by 15,000 square feet and add another inventory warehouse.

CAST AND CREW

Kalt credits the quality of CME's social media with improving its bottom line. "Lots of people make lessons videos, but many are done in an amateur way," he said.

He never overlooks the importance of top-notch lighting and sound, especially when the proper reproduction of a product's tone is critical. For that reason, he has enlisted a dedicated video-production and e-commerce staff in addition to his 22-person sales team.

"I had to figure out how to bottle and

package [the brand]," Kalt explained. "Facebook and YouTube are mediums. But it's the content, not the medium, that draws people in."

Perhaps the greatest example of this approach is CME's "100 Riffs (A Brief History Of Rock 'N' Roll)" video, which has garnered more than 3.8 million hits. In the video, a medley of 100 guitar licks is performed over one 12-minute take by CME salesperson Alex Chadwick. It includes graphics of each song title and is carefully staged so Chadwick's hands and stock Fender ax are visible.

"We did it professionally," Kalt said. "Anyone struggling to play those songs is blown away. And all the non-musicians who hear them in a nice medley like it equally."

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

Sometimes, the attention CME receives from its well-maintained collection of videos is more than Kalt anticipates. Many professional recording artists to whom he's sold gear — from Slash to Wilco's Jeff Tweedy — found CME through an online demo.

Kalt always seizes the opportunity to recruit his rock star clients as video sub-

jects. The result is what he calls a "symbiotic relationship" that benefits both parties on a promotional level.

"I had this band here, Yonder Mountain, who created an impromptu video," Kalt said. "We put it on Facebook and on our blog. Suddenly, Yonder Mountain fans were introduced to us, and we were introduced to them."

The synergy has also been working for pedal suppliers such as JHS, Jackson Ampworks and Fulltone. Kalt constantly communicates with manufacturers, who sometimes contact him of their own accord.

"There are lots of suppliers that use us to help showcase their product, because they love our videos so much," he said.

Above all, Kalt wants CME's online presence to function as the perfect complement to its longstanding reputation of quality products and knowledgeable employees. He thinks that's essential in today's industry.

"I can't just be good at retail or online in this environment," he said. "All of the great eye candy on our website can be equally pleasing to our customers. That's what I'm trying to create." —HB

CHICAGO MUSIC EXCHANGE

Chicago

PRINCIPALS
David Kalt

FOUNDED
1990

EMPLOYEES
23

STORES
1

ANNUAL REVENUE
\$8.5 million



David Kalt

Photo by Daniel Shea

Cyber Service

Folkmusician.com stays small, sees big growth

Early on, Robert Fear learned an important lesson about the value of staying small.

Three years after founding his e-tail company, Folkmusician.com, he had eight people on staff and a booming business. Then, the 2002 dock strike cut off his new-product supply. He couldn't fulfill orders and almost had to close shop.

"With a business that had been going at a pretty good rate, it was really hard to recover from a few weeks of no sales whatsoever," said Fear, who runs the company with his wife, Amelie.

The Reno, Nev.-based e-tailer, which specializes in mandolins, came back from near-death as a leaner operation. Its staff shrunk to just the husband-and-wife team and one part-timer. And while Fear acknowledged that he'd like to rebuild his workforce eventually, the benefits in stability and profitability are clear.

FOLKMUSICIAN.COM

Reno, Nev.

PRINCIPALS

Robert and Amelie Fear

FOUNDED

1999

EMPLOYEES

2

STORES

1

ANNUAL REVENUE

< \$1 million

"We're older and wiser now," Fear said. "We've stayed small for that particular reason. I'm going to be very cautious from here on out."

COMPETING THROUGH SETUPS

A page on Folkmusician.com's website details in painstaking but accessible language the different adjustments the company makes when setting up a mandolin. Everything from the bridge to the frets to the action gets tweaked before an instrument goes out the door. More than any other factor, Fear attributed his company's stability to this service. He even called setups "the main thing" that drives his business.

"I'm honestly not aware of any other dealer that's doing the level of setup work that we are," he said.

The setup page has been linked to every individual product page on the site to ensure shoppers recognize the service. Still, Fear admitted the page doesn't go deep enough for his tastes. "As time permits, I do plan to elaborate on it, even possibly adding videos and such," he said.

The setups can be a lot of work — much of which Fear does himself — but they've become Folkmusician.com's calling card on-

line. "People are not contacting us randomly," he said. "They're very aware that they're going to pay a little extra, but they want to for the setup work. The vast majority of customers who call in are well-aware of what we do and know me by name."

ONLINE OVERHAUL

Fear can keep up this level of service, he said, because other key areas of his business are so "automated and streamlined." He plans to build on that strength with version five of his website early next year. Customer reviews and stronger cross-selling and up-selling features are on the upgrades menu. Fear wants "to get as close to Amazon as we can," he said.

Just don't expect to see an outside programmer. Since the beginning, he and Amelie have handled Web development by themselves.

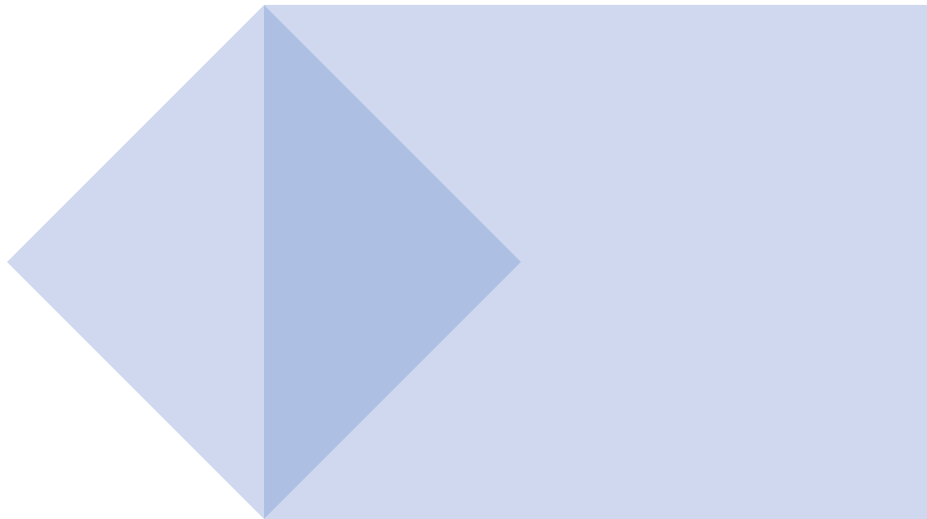
"We've done everything, and I really think that's key to our survival," he said. "We really studied and figured out how to do it. That allowed us to go ahead and grow. If we had to pay someone, it wouldn't have happened." —ZP



Robert Fier

Constant Change

Revamping its business and website has helped Kraft Music stay current in the MI market



Ben Kraft, owner of Kraft Music, has a knack for evolving his business. What started out as a keyboard-only retail operation under the name Kraft Keyboards in 1984 is now a full-line dealership with strong Web-based business. So strong, according to Kraft, that only 10 percent of Kraft Music's sales are made at its Franklin, Wis.-based showroom.

"[The rest of the] sales are generated via the Web," Kraft said. "Whether they place an order using the website's shopping cart, or call us, we have an experienced, helpful sales team to answer questions, and, ultimately, take orders. Nearly all of our business is generated outside of the showroom."

The store's website, kraftmusic.com, was launched in the early 1990s, giving it plenty of time to evolve.

"I can remember being one of the first advertisers on harmonycentral.com, paying a mere \$100 per month for banner ads, and we actually wondered whether or not it was worth it," Kraft said.

Today, Kraft Music employs an interac-

tive marketing specialist who manages all of its paid campaigns, along with a staff that manages the overall content strategies, data feeds and third party sites.

"They're relentless in their pursuits to make Kraft Music a recognizable name," Kraft said.

DISTRIBUTION OVERHAUL

This past year, Kraft's evolution extended outside of its Web operations and into the store's new distribution center, opened in February.

Faced with a space shortage at its headquarters, which formerly dedicated 11,000 square feet to warehouse and shipping activities, Kraft found a new 42,000-square-foot facility just

two minutes away.

"[The facility] has opened up our world to being able to stock appropriately, ship efficiently and take advantage of buying opportunities that come up here and there," Kraft said. "We went from having one small loading dock in the corner of our building to having five docks and 30-foot clear height. It has made a tremendous difference in our capabilities."

The new distribution center has also made it easier for Kraft Music to please its customers.

"We love the concepts of just-in-time inventory and dropshipping, but in order to deliver the kind of customer experience we strive for, we can't be afraid of inventory," Kraft said. "There are a few of us who have our hands in the buying process and have spent an enormous amount of time planning, reviewing and checking our collective 'guts,' but we're also not afraid to invest in inventory so we can say to a customer, 'Yes, we can ship it today.' Our distribution center has helped us make great strides." —KK

KRAFT MUSIC

Franklin, Wis.

PRINCIPAL
Ben Kraft

FOUNDED
1984

EMPLOYEES
24

STORE
1

ANNUAL REVENUE
Undisclosed



Ben Kraft

Audio Mecca

The retailer's audio showroom in Manhattan offers a personal shopping experience in an audio-heavy market



Madli Kents

Shane Koss

Four years ago, Alto Music opened a pro-audio mecca in the heart of Manhattan. Today, the showroom, which showcases the store's full line of audio products in a recording studio setup, is exceeding owner Jon Haber's expectations.

"We've always had a good customer base in New York City," Haber said. "We felt that by tailoring the showroom to our largest customer base in New York — pro audio — we would be able to offer a really nice customer experience. Plus, we would have a place in the city to hang our hat where international customers who were visiting could pick up gear."

STAFF-DRIVEN SALES

While Haber owns four other full-line Alto Music locations throughout New York state, the Manhattan showroom is a streamlined two-person operation with Madli Kents at the front desk and audio aficionado Shane Koss at the store's helm.

Koss said the showroom, open by appointment only, lets him take a more relaxed one-on-one sales approach.

"I believe in giving people an honest opinion," he said. "Since I get to speak with them in a more personal setting, I am able

to pick out what is right for each client and tell them that they don't need this or they already have that."

Alto's Manhattan location also offers billable support for all the systems it sells, a service Koss performs over iChat or in person. He regularly travels around the Tri-State area and has ventured as far as California, London and Korea. "I've been working with [this recording gear] long enough, and I have a weird-enough and unique-enough skills blend that I know the overlap of all these systems," Koss said. "I also have a musical background so I understand what they are trying to do and where they are coming from."

SMALL SIZE, BIG NICHE

Since the showroom is only about 800 square feet, all products displayed are warehoused at Alto Music's flagship store in Middletown, N.Y. In an average week, the showroom sees anywhere from five to

10 customers. Since it's a fully-functioning recording studio, one way it increases visibility is by hosting informative and manufacturer seminars.

While it may be small in size, it fills an important niche in the pro audio-heavy New York market. "It's a very central location," Koss said. "Most of our clients are studios or composers. It's a major plus that we have a place right here in Manhattan."

And it's the location that has helped the store garner such famous clientele as Dave Gahan of Depeche Mode.

"It's nice because customers can come in and talk to someone who's not juggling 10 other things," Koss said. "Most professionals prefer that. Plus, we are one of the few [stores] that feature high-end gear, and actually have that gear connected and in working order. This, combined with our knowledge and low pressure environment makes us unique in New York City." —KK

ALTO MUSIC

Middletown, N.Y.

PRINCIPAL
Jon Haber

FOUNDED
1989

EMPLOYEES
88

STORES
5

ANNUAL REVENUE
\$45 million



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Class Act

A storied mini-chain in the Heartland grows by growing its own

“Out here in Iowa, we have only 3 million people in the entire state,” said West Music president and CEO Robin Walenta. “So you’ve got to get them all playing — and not just playing one instrument. We’ve got to create our own customers.”

Founded as a band and orchestra service center, this Coralville, Iowa-based, six-location chain has been building its own market for almost all of its 71 years. West Music remains synonymous with a commitment to school music, growing its population of customers from their earliest years.

Out of that “core competency,” as Walenta described it, has grown a mission to bring music to underserved populations and other niche markets. For instance, the 172-employee operation employs 13 full-time music therapists, and is active in lobbying at the state level to recognize the value of such programs for insurance reimbursement. Lately, the company has also boosted its efforts to reach the Hispanic market.

“That community is the fastest-growing population group in the United States, and we have a good cross-section throughout the state,” Walenta said. “We do serve the rest of the country. This is a population that

isn’t necessarily participating in traditional school music programs — band, orchestral, choral — and so they have been left out. Yet music is so important in their culture. So putting mariachi music into school programs gives them an outlet to participate.”

West Music’s suppliers noted the company’s “focused and engaged” leadership — but Walenta is quick to praise “associates” across all levels. She recently restructured West Music’s purchasing department into “merchandise management teams,” giving the managers greater focus and responsibility. “That allows them to look across all channels of distribution and at the diversity of the customers we service and align the right products at the right price through the right channel,” she said. Each week, the separate teams have a video conference call, sharing ideas derived from customer inter-

WEST MUSIC

Coralville, Iowa

PRINCIPALS
Robin Walenta
Steve West
Ryan West

FOUNDED
1941

EMPLOYEES
172

STORES
6

ANNUAL REVENUE
\$32 million

Robin Walenta



actions, merchandising tips and other strategies that have worked on the sales floor. Vendors are invited and often participate, according to Walenta. “They really help us to understand the features, benefits and advantages of the product, so we can represent them well,” she said.

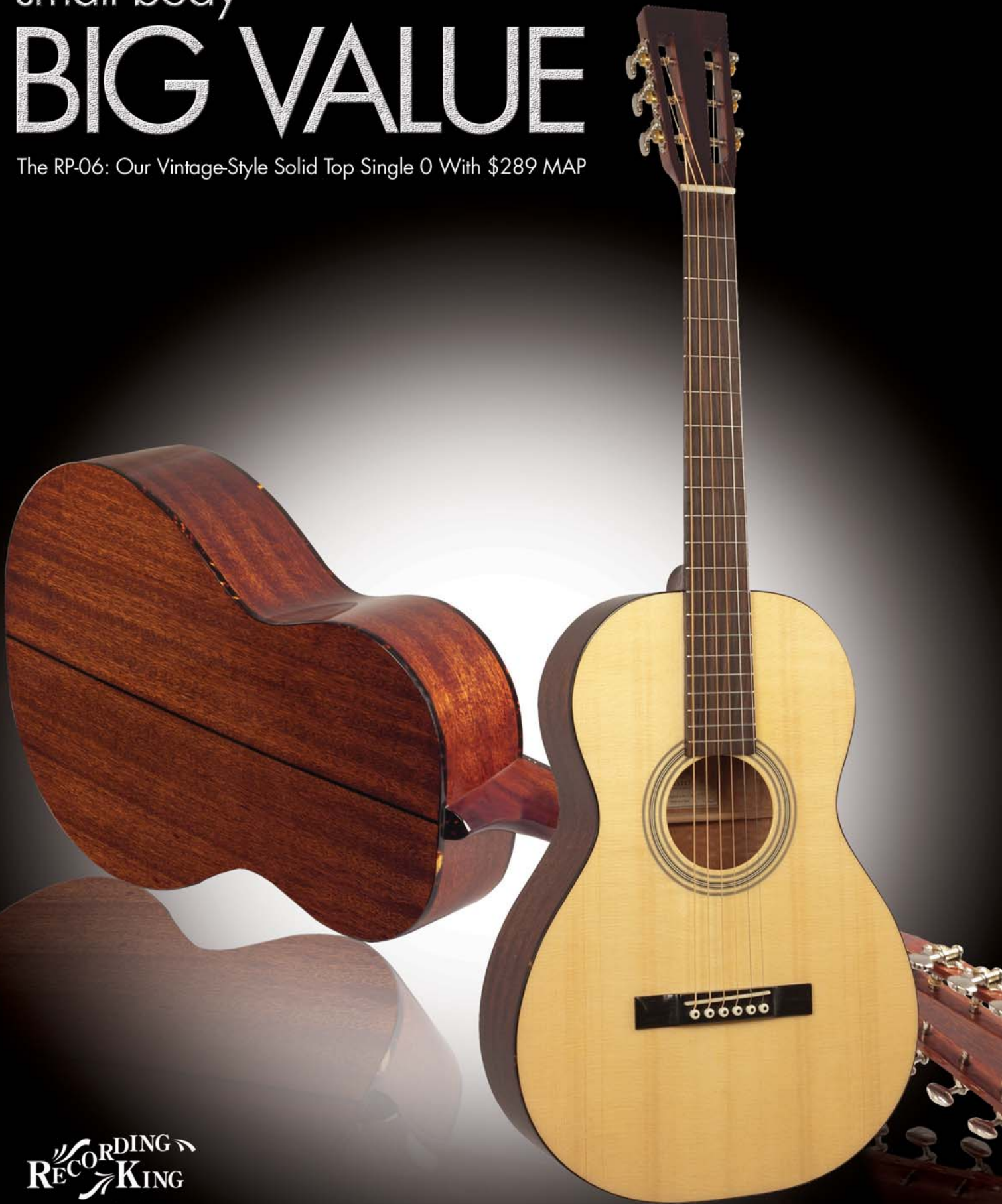
West’s focused execution and its Iowa setting have immunized the operation from much of the economic downturn (“Our housing prices never got so overinflated,” Walenta noted), and Walenta reported the company’s sales (about \$32 million annually) as “up slightly” in 2012. Band and orchestral business seems to be benefitting from a spike in birthrates, Walenta added, and above all, the team is in place.

“I know a lot of CEOs use this tagline, but it really is the people who make the difference here,” Walenta said. “I’m very fortunate to be surrounded by passionate, creative employees. And they come to work every day wanting to make a difference in the lives of our customers.” —DZ

small body

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Strategic Partnerships

Music & Arts focuses on its constituents while ushering in seven new stores

Next year should be a landmark time for Music & Arts. The Frederick, Md.-based school music giant plans to roll out seven stores (bringing its total to 116), christen a new distribution center and start overhauling the company's 26-year-old software systems. And a key way Music & Arts will manage this burst of activity is through a culture of partnerships.

"The bottom line, and the focus, is that we take care of our constituent groups — our customers, our suppliers, our investors and our teammates," said Ron Beaudoin, the compa-



Ron Beaudoin

Paul Martinson

Ken O'Brien

David Fuhr

Allan Greenburg

MUSIC & ARTS

Frederick, Md.

PRINCIPAL
Ken O'Brien

FOUNDED
1952

EMPLOYEES
1,200

STORES
109

ANNUAL REVENUE
\$150 million

ny's executive vice president of sales and marketing. "We take care of people. And we treat all the constituent groups with fair dealings."

Here's a deeper look at how this culture benefited Music & Arts in 2012:

+ Refreshed stores. The company recently joined forces with print music publisher Hal Leonard to make stores "more exciting and inspirational," according to Beaudoin. Hal Leonard provided artist images for Music & Arts to showcase in the front windows of its retail locations. Hal Leonard executives simply asked that they have a say in what artists get featured and when.

"It's been a win-win," Beaudoin said. "It's really helped make the stores look exciting, and Hal Leonard is getting all this great exposure in all kinds of shopping centers where we have stores for their products and their artists."

but they'll also respond to any issues. This feedback loop helps create effective communications at every level.

"Anybody can pick up the phone and talk with anybody two or three levels above their immediate supervisor without fear of repercussion or other negative behavior," Beaudoin said. "It's just not allowed. We don't do it. And that way, everybody is in the loop. They stay informed, and we get the best response."

+ New markets. This fall, Music & Arts partnered with its parent company, Guitar Center, to dig even deeper into the school music business. Thirty-one GC stores came on-board as Music & Arts rental affiliates, giving the company a foothold in a new and different market, and more are planned to come on-board for 2013.

"It hasn't been as difficult as one would think to implement," Beaudoin said of making

+ Constant feedback. Music & Arts execs often ask staff for input. Employees know the higher-ups listen, which, in turn, encourages employees to share even more. After every rental season, for example, each manager submits a report that details what worked and what didn't. Execs not only read these reports

GC stores rental affiliates. "In Southern California, for instance, Guitar Center is the neighborhood music store. When I visit the GC stores, I see a whole cross-section of customers.

"Based on this success, we believe we have opportunity to add GC stores as affiliates in additional markets." —ZP

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Full Speed

In the upper Midwest, a growing powerhouse meets every customer need

“I am proud of our hospitality,” said Jonathan Lipp, co-founder of Madison, Wis.-based Full Compass Systems. He was speaking about the way the company handles visiting vendors, but the comment also reveals a great deal about how he and his wife, co-owner Susan, approach their business. Put plainly, things are taken care of, in a way designed to bring benefit to all parties.

Employees at the 140,000-square-foot headquarters, built in 2009, can enjoy chef-prepared meals in the Backstage Bistro. Two lactation rooms serve mothers returning to the workforce. Sales staff — many with tenure in the decades — receive ongoing training. And the prosperity is shared. Top salespeople have been rewarded with vacations to New York, Las Vegas, New Orleans and Chicago. “When we started out, we couldn’t do trips,” said Susan. “We were church-mouse poor. When we got to where we could get a trip from a manufacturer, we went for it. And four or five years ago I realized that the coolest thing we could do for our top producers was a trip.”

“We really wine and dine them,” added Jonathan. “And their spouses, too. The trips

create a sense of community among the couples as they get to know each other. It’s one of many things that makes working at Full Compass more than just a job.”

Clearly, though, it’s not all fun and games. The Lippes revamped a program recognizing \$1 million sellers when they realized that nearly the entire staff were reaching the goal. The new structure features a top category of Diamond sellers — those who bring in gross profit above \$825,000. Susan said that one salesperson topped \$1 million in profit this fiscal year.

Full Compass began 35 years ago, primarily providing radio broadcasting equipment to a national market. They branched out into recording and educational equipment, moved into theatrical and television lighting, and then started providing systems for clubs and

Susan and Jonathan Lipp



Photo by Chris Pascus

FULL COMPASS SYSTEMS

Madison, Wis.

PRINCIPALS
Jonathan and Susan Lipp

FOUNDED
1977

EMPLOYEES
196

STORES
1

ANNUAL REVENUE
\$119 million

entertainment venues. Selling portable recording gear from Yamaha and Roland soon lead Full Compass into keyboards. Then came electronic drums. And so on. “When we engage a particular industry, we learn from them what they want,” said Jonathan. “When we started with theatrical, selling lighting and gels and the other accoutrements, we also sold gloves and belts and other things that the stage technicians would use.”

“Houses of worship purchase a broad spectrum of nearly everything we sell,” added Susan, describing it as a strong market over the past decade. Today, with a touch of wonder in their voices, the Lippes describe a booming guitar and drum business. Their suppliers, however, don’t seem surprised at all.

“I have worked with them for over 15 years and it has been a strong and productive partnership,” said one. “Professional, knowledgeable sales and support staff. A class organization from top to bottom.” —DZ

**WE'RE IN THIS
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HOSHINO (U.S.A) INC.

With the trials and travails of the economy, the last few years have been more than a little "challenging" for Hoshino... and for our retailers. So when you selected us for the *2012 Supplier Excellence Award*, there really are no words to adequately express our gratitude for your support. To you, our Hoshino dealers, we offer our deepest appreciation and warmest thanks along with our continued commitment to music dealer-friendly policies through good times and bad. Which is the way it should be. Because we really are in this together.



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Keeping *Cool*

Instrumental Music stays relevant in a crowded marketplace

Instrumental Music has stayed relevant in an Internet- and big box-dominated marketplace by staying true to exactly what it is: a local, independent retailer that thrives on customer engagement.

With three locations in Southern California's Ventura County (Ventura, Thousand Oaks and Santa Barbara), Instrumental Music manages to draw customers despite intense competition of every type. Proprietor Bryan McCann attributes his company's viability to an enthusiastic, well-trained sales staff that helps him maintain a compelling alternative to many of the more common, less personal retail environments.

"For an independent retailer, you really need to have someone in the store who's knowledgeable, who's passionate and hopefully inspires the customer," McCann said. "If it's a product that they really like, the customer will get excited about it, and that's going to create the relationship where hopefully we'll get the sale."

Operating brick-and-mortar stores gives McCann a distinct advantage in this regard. He sees opportunity in the person-to-person contact that's a part of everyday life at Instrumental Music, where customer service

and product selection are just as important as competitive prices.

"We have relatively low staff turnover, and we're able to create a compelling alternative to the big box store," said McCann, who has been competing with Guitar Center since he opened. "I've had to make investments in inventory and update our displays to stay competitive. Having a good guitar selection is important. You can have a whole bunch of black and sunburst Strats on the wall, but that's not necessarily appealing to the player who wants to see some interesting pieces."

One of Instrumental Music's unique selling positions is that it offers instruments you're not likely to see at a chain.

"Having the same stuff that everybody else has at MAP pricing makes you irrelevant in the marketplace in the eyes of the customer."

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Thousand Oaks, Calif.

PRINCIPAL
Bryan McCann

FOUNDED
1979

EMPLOYEES
20

STORES
3

ANNUAL REVENUE
> \$2 million

UNIQUE INVENTORY

McCann cites his stock of high-end Taylor guitars and limited-run instruments from Fender's Special Run program as examples of his distinctive inventory. These and other specialty items are well-represented in Instrumental Music's annual fourth-quarter newsletter, a 16-page tabloid that has proven to



Bryan McCann

be a highly effective year-round marketing tool.

“People walk into an independent retailer of any kind, and one of the first questions they ask is, ‘Can these guys be competitive with the big chain stores?’” McCann said. “I think the way our document is set up establishes some credibility.

“It also displays a lot of high-end product. You don’t see a lot of Gretsch White Falcons in many publications, and it shows that we carry the high end. People want to go to a music store and see cool things, so our commitment to higher-end product that you don’t see anywhere is very important.”

CULTIVATING GOODWILL

Having a service department staffed with experienced technicians is another important dimension of Instrumental Music’s business model.

“We’ve seen a big decline in sales of entry-level packs — those people are buying their guitars at Costco and mass merchants,” McCann said. “They need to be adjusted to play well, so our service department is a key point of contact where we can actually get the customer relationship started. Wherever they bought the instrument, it’s an opportunity for us. They come in and they have a good experience, and the next upgrade guitar is from

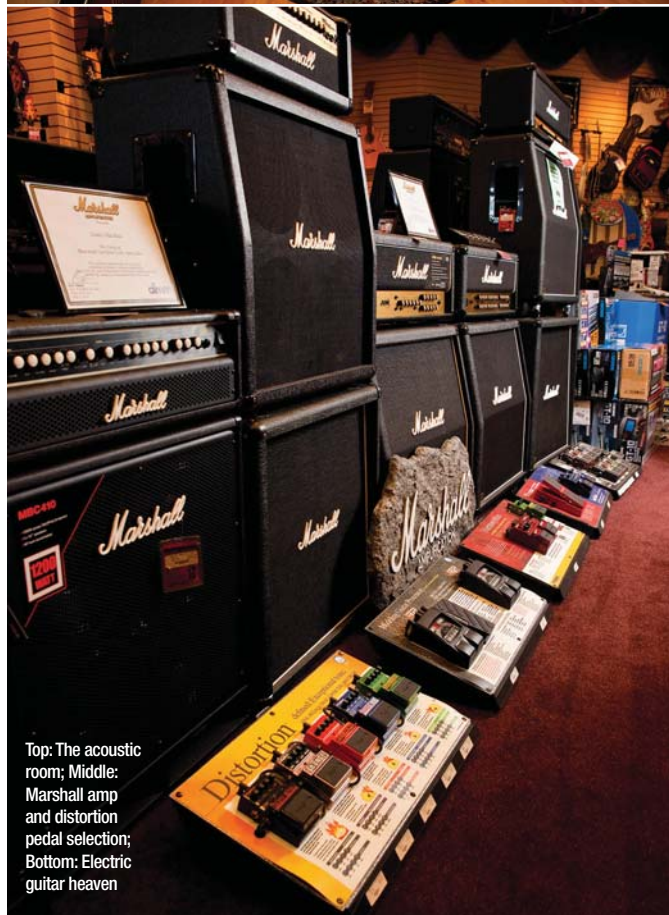
us. And maybe they sign up for our lessons program.”

In-store clinics are also a bright spot for Instrumental Music in terms of engaging customers and cultivating goodwill. “It brings the community together and establishes relevance for the store,” McCann said. “An online retailer does not provide those kinds of inspiring experiences.”

Customer engagement and goodwill are essential to propagating business, but they aren’t enough to sustain an independent entity like Instrumental Music. McCann also puts a lot of time and work into upholding his company’s best pricing guarantee. “Price has to be something that’s part of your value,” he said. “We don’t have to be the lowest possible price, but we have to be competitive.”

McCann sees pricing, service, inventory and the personal touch as part of an overall equation he has to balance in order to stay “relevant” and not settle for being a store with some merchandise and a clerk to ring purchases.

“The age of the clerk is pretty much over for brick-and-mortar retailers,” he said. “The Internet is the ultimate clerk marketplace. So it’s really important to have staff who develop a rapport with the customers, who are experts on the products we stock and who are enthusiastic.” —EE



Top: The acoustic room; Middle: Marshall amp and distortion pedal selection; Bottom: Electric guitar heaven



Simple Lessons

Exceptional service and a commitment to its community help a school music dealer stay strong



Don Lazar

With one location serving the school band business, Don Lazar Music is about as independent as a retailer can be. The store is completely focused on leasing, selling and repairing band instruments, as well as providing related accessories and print music to customers in the greater Canton, Ohio, area.

Proprietor Don Lazar has found that sticking with his niche market and providing outstanding customer service are key to his ongoing success.

The store has long been known for its first-rate repair department, which is staffed by three full-time technicians. “The repairing end helps us with every other aspect of what we do,” said Lazar, who has been in business for 42 years. Many of the instruments the family-owned company services are from its rental pool, which has grown in recent times as local school budgets have increased. He employs two road reps to cover his territory.

Lazar’s longstanding support for local band competitions and concerts contributes to his popularity among customers, but a solid reputation in the community is what

keeps his business strong. “I’m sort of a silent dealer who gives a little bit out on the side that nobody has to know about,” he said. “It’s a little different nowadays—you have to get in your pocket a little bit more. I’d rather give it to a kid who doesn’t have anything, like when a parent can’t afford the horn and brings it back and the kid is crying. I do it that way. It’s a problem in today’s market with rentals, too. Some people just can’t afford it, and I’m lenient enough where if they tell me they’ve got problems, I always work something out. That’s what you have to do today to keep things going, and that word-of-mouth has helped me for years. My repeat business is so good; I’ve been very lucky in that regard. There are some schools that I’ve been in for 42 years.”

DON LAZAR MUSIC

Canton, Ohio

PRINCIPALS
Don and Karen Lazar

FOUNDED
1970

EMPLOYEES
2

STORES
1

ANNUAL REVENUE
Undisclosed

Lazar is a firm believer in keeping things simple and manageable. He used to deal in orchestral instruments, guitars and keyboards, but now his inventory is dedicated strictly to concert band instruments and related products.

Lazar has operated additional locations in the past, but scaled that back as well when he decided that a single 1,000-square-foot store with a separate 2,000-square-foot service center would be sufficient to serve the market.

“I can keep an eye on stuff a lot better, believe it or not,” said Lazar, whose wife, Karen, also works at the store. “I like to do my own bag. There are a lot of other music stores around, [such as] Pellegrino Music, Canton Music Center, and Akron and Cleveland are right up the road. But I don’t worry about any of them. At one time I did a 100-mile radius outside of Canton, but I cut it back a little bit, and it works out fine. Everybody worries about everybody else, and I just worry about me.” —EE

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Such is the story for 15-year-old Waylon Rector. Waylon had a summer most musicians only dream about. He was hand-selected out of 8,000 School of Rock students to be part of an elite team of musicians known as the AllStars. Each summer the AllStars tour throughout the US. This year's tour featured 30 shows with stops at major rock festivals such as Lollapalooza, Warped Tour, and Summerfest, and iconic music venues such as Red Rocks Amphitheatre and the Hard

Rock Hotel in Las Vegas. "School of Rock continues to change my life and I have a whole summer of playing to lots of people to prove it," says Waylon.

Along with playing amazing shows, Waylon and the AllStars raised awareness for a very worthy cause. At each tour stop, they assisted Love Hope Strength, the world's leading Rock n Roll Cancer Foundation, in saving lives one concert at a time. School of Rock Allstars played an active role in getting concert goers on the bone marrow donor list. Who knows, maybe Waylon's tour will save a life?

As a company, School of Rock is further establishing itself as the world's leader in performance-based music

ADVERTORIAL

School of Rock AllStars
Red Rocks Amphitheatre
July 2, 2012: 8,000+ Attendees



education. With almost 100 schools in North America and an additional 10 to 15 schools set to open by year's end, School of Rock is ready to reach more kids than ever.

School of Rock is driven by a purpose to inspire kids to rock on stage and in life. Their unique approach to music instruction has students attend weekly private lessons and structured rehearsals. Students learn to master their instruments and then apply their skills live on stage at a real rock venue. Throughout each year, the schools perform thousands of shows to tens of thousands of people. "There is no teacher like the stage and nothing more powerful than uniting kids around

a common goal." says Chris Catalano CEO of School of Rock. "Our kids learn by doing. They learn to work as a team and become more self-confident all while forming bonds with other like-minded musicians. They have fun in a safe, positive and cool environment."

School of Rock is proving to be a rewarding business for franchise partners around the world. "This has been an incredible experience." says Mike Morpurgo, Franchise owner in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. "I get to share my love for music with kids through the best music program ever." School of Rock is looking for partners interested in fostering the next generation of great artists.

Claim Your Territory Today:
877.556.6184 - Franchising.SchoolofRock.com

Kala Ukuleles

"Try as we might, we can't keep these in the store," said a dealer about Kala ukuleles. "During slower times in the summer, uke sales have really helped pay the lighting bill." Another retailer added that the instruments sell to just about everyone who passes through his showroom. "[Kala] just keeps on being a strong performer for us," the dealer said. In late summer, the company debuted a modified design of its archtop model with the JTE-2TS. The tenor-sized uke features a satin finish and comes fitted with an active EQ system. kalabrand.com



Fender Mustang Amp

The Mustang lineup continues to dominate retail amp sales with an off-the-charts price-performance ratio. A quick glance at the best-selling Mustang Mini reveals why. Featuring a \$175 MSRP, the 7-watt unit makes for an ideal practice amp. It boasts 24 on-board presets built from eight digital amp models and a dozen digital effects. The included Fender Fuse software lets players customize their settings, then share them with other Mustang users online via a built-in USB port. An on-board tuner provides additional convenience. fender.com

Snark Tuners

These popular accessories have dominated *Music Inc.*'s pages during the past few years, and for good reason. Here's what a handful of nominating retailers

had to say about the tuners:

- + "Quality product, high turns, low returns, good profit."
- + "It's the only product in nearly 30 years of business that actually flew off the shelf as the sales reps always claim about other items."
- + "Easy to use, good marketing, good price point, plenty of margin."
- + "Can't beat it, no matter how [hard] you want to try." snarktuners.com

Fender Select Series

This double-threat delivers high-end quality in a mid-priced guitar and bass lineup. The Strat, for example, boasts a dark-cherry burst gloss-lacquer finish and natural binding, C-shaped flame maple neck, Bi-flex truss rod, new Fender Select Stratocaster single-coil pickups and satin lacquer back finish. Add to that a three-ply pickguard and two-point synchronized tremolo bridge with vintage-style bent steel saddles, all for a MAP of \$2,049. fender.com



Lâg Acoustic Guitars

One retailer called Lâg acoustics “the easiest sale we make at the store today” and “simply without equal in the marketplace,” particularly when it comes to models that street for less than \$599. Another dealer commented that Lâg’s putting a “new spin” on the acoustic-electric market segment with guitars featuring unique aesthetics, on-board electronics and “usable presets.” lagguitars.com



Yamaha THR10

Yamaha THR10 became the hippest practice amp in the business for 2012. From a cool industrial design to built-in, hi-fi stereo, the THR10 offers guitarists multi-effects and amp modeling at a \$299.99 MAP. All of that had dealers raving. “Great price. Fantastic features. Great sound! We can’t keep them in stock,” said one voter. yamaha.com





Universal Audio *Apollo*

This high-resolution audio interface turned out to be a big seller among nominating audio and recording retailers. **It merges the best of Universal Audio's analog and digital traditions** and gives users a way to track through UAD Powered Plug-ins in real time. Plus, Apollo features 24-bit, 192-kHz audio and high-end mic pre-amps and converters to deliver massive dynamic range. **{uaudio.com}**

Avid *Pro Tools 10*

Pro Tools 9 made the popular recording software accessible to all users by going open platform. Pro Tools 10 upped the ante by adding such user-requested features as clip gain. **"In a bold move, Avid took its industry-standard Pro Tools recording software and made it available independent of the recording hardware** it was previously tied to," said one retailer, "Avid opened its flagship audio production software suite to the entire market, which, in my opinion, was a home run." **{avid.com}**



Behringer *X32*

"This product just arrived, but it really looks to be the game changer that they say it is," said a retailer of the X32 digital mixer. "The product is new, so time will tell, but it's a piece loaded with features at a great price." Those features include 40 processing channels with 25 mix busses. Programmable Midas mic pre-amps produce high-quality sound, while 40-bit floating-point DSP offers exceptional dynamic range and extremely low latency. Fully automated 100-mm faders give users serious DAW control and instant overview of mixes. **{behringer.com}**



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Crush Acrylic Drumset

"If I had to choose one product for the year, it's Crush's Acrylic kit," gushed one retailer. "It's an improvement over the acrylic kits of yesterday with seamless shell construction, better bearing edges and smart, functional hardware. **Its design and marketing speak to our younger customers,** and with a street price of \$999 it's been a top seller." In addition, the product description on the company's website encapsulates the sound in "two words: fat and punchy!" **{crushdrums.com}**



Roland TD-30K V-Drum

The latest Roland V-Drums are proving to be a hit with retailers. **"Consumer buzz and pre-order has been very high,"** noted one. This set is "the new flagship for V-Drums at a time when digital drums are truly gaining acceptance by my customers," said another. The kits include new sounds, including an ambience feature that emulates overhead mics and room sounds. **{rolandconnect.com}**



Mapex MyDentity

Finished and assembled at the MyDentity custom shop in Nashville, Tenn., these drums offer players a custom experience more quickly and affordably than many other sets. And retailers say they are liking the choices. The MyDentity drums provide **"almost infinite options for drummers right here in my shop,"** said one retailer. "[The set has] tons of finish options ... at a great price," noted another. **{mapexdrums.com}**



Sonor Jojo Mayer Pedal

"When we see innovation and functional design, we notice," said one retailer, describing Sonor's Jojo Mayer Perfect Balance Bass Drum Pedal. **"Although the coolest feature is that it folds up with the push of a button,** it's also fast and balanced." The pedal's drive cam and beater hub are streamlined into a single unit for low mass. "This pedal will not put any obstacles in your way to develop a level of speed, control and power that can not be obtained with most pedals," Mayer said. **{jojopedal.com}**



Photo credit: Robert Downs 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!

Jody Jazz *Mouthpieces*

Jody Espina has been making saxophone and clarinet mouthpieces under the JodyJazz banner since 2000. In JodyJazz, Espina has developed a high-quality, high-margin mouthpiece brand that has blossomed with products available in more than 300 music stores worldwide.

"Great margin for the dealer, great brand story and a great face behind the product in Jody Espina," said one voter. "He truly represents the product in an uncompromising manner in this niche business." **{jodyjazz.com}**

Jiggs *pBone*

Who would have thought that a plastic trombone with a street price of around \$150 would be a runaway hit in the school music market? The Jiggs pBone should be familiar to anyone who watches college football; you can't miss it, in school colors, on the sideline.

"Conn-Selmer's pBones in red, blue, yellow, green and now purple have added great color to our band instrument displays while generating a lot of customer interest," said one retail voter. "We've had them in our stores for a full year now and sales are continuing to grow." **{conn-selmer.com}**

band instrument displays while generating a lot of customer interest," said one retail voter. "We've had them in our stores for a full year now and sales are continuing to grow." **{conn-selmer.com}**



Powell *Flutes*

Powell Flutes have been in the hands of top flutists in America since the 1920s, and the company continues to deliver for retailers and musicians alike in 2012. With an increased opportunity in high-end instruments, more retailers have taken on the line to rave reviews. In praising the company's Custom and Conservatory Aurumite Flutes, one retail nominator said: **"The blending of gold and silver in these fine, handcrafted flutes give them a sound and response unlike any other flute."** **{powellflutes.com}**

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Kawai CA95

The Kawai CA95 garnered a lot of attention thanks to its tone generator (TG), which boasts significantly more processing power, allowing for technical improvements in the instrument. The CA95 features 256 notes of polyphony and improved digital to analog audio conversion. The new TG also offers enhanced and expanded reverbs and effects. Other features include the new Harmonic Imaging XL sound technology and the new grand feel (GF) action. The CA95 is a “versatile instrument for pianists and music enthusiasts who appreciate owning a nice piano,” to quote a satisfied Kawai dealer. kawaius.com



Yamaha AvantGrand

Hybrid pianos continue to gain market acceptance as proven by retailers responding to Yamaha’s AvantGrand Series. “AvantGrand is a major innovation in the piano business,” said one retail nominator. “In providing a true piano action with a great digital sound, it gives our customer the best of both worlds. The AvantGrand is a perfect instrument for many institutional settings as well as for home use. The NU1, in particular, addresses a segment of our market that was previously too hard to capture.” yamaha.com

Roland FP-7F

“The FP-7F is easy to use and has every feature a gigging keyboardist needs,” said one retail voter about the digital piano. The instrument boasts Roland’s SuperNATURAL piano sound engine, a PHA III Ivory Feel-S keyboard with Escapement, a vocal mic input with companion harmony effects and an onboard looper. The FP-7F is available in black and white finishes and comes standard with a DP-10 damper pedal. roland.com





American DJ *Mega Par Profile*

American DJ's Mega Par Profile is an all-in-one LED par system for mobile entertainers and stage performers. The system includes four Mega Par Profile LED wash fixtures, one foot controller, lighting stand, stand bag and soft case. The units feature American DJ's exclusive sit-flat design, with its power and DMX connectors positioned on the side of the unit, giving them the versatility to be placed directly on the floor or hung up. According to retail voters, the light is a sure-fire seller. **"We sold 30 to one customer in August,"** said one. "He would have bought more had we had more in stock. We are newbies to lighting and only started delving deep this year. American DJ makes it a no-brainer." americandj.com

Music Inc 2012 Product Excellence Award Winner

"Thank you to all our dealer friends. We are very proud to offer you the finest mouthpieces available."

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Open-Door Policy

Hoshino's rapport-building yields rapid returns

The best relationships are built on honesty and support. And when it comes to the rapport between Hoshino and its vendors, endorsers and end-users, the umbrella company that houses the Ibanez and Tama brands embraces that concept wholeheartedly.

One Excellence Awards voter described the Hoshino philosophy: "When things are working great, they listen. When something isn't working, they listen. They have a much higher level of curiosity, passion and humility than most other manufacturers."

DIPLMACY COUNTS

Even in tough economic times, Hoshino strives for transparency with its dealers. According to Hoshino Director of National Sales Ed O'Donnell,



From left: Ed O'Donnell, William Reim and Shogo Hayashi

clarity and consistency are key factors in satisfying retailers.

"We openly share operational, tacti-

cal and strategic information that will benefit the vendor-dealer relationship," O'Donnell said.

Effective communication is a two-way street, especially because Hoshino, a global manufacturer, relies on dealers and endorsers to advise them on U.S.-specific trends. For that reason, Hoshino abides by what O'Donnell called a "three-pronged" approach to identifying new markets and solidifying its lineup of products.

"We consult our endorsers, who have contributed greatly to the success of our brands," he said. "We rely heavily on our dealer partners, who are at the forefront of consumer demand. And we also pay attention to the end-user who takes time to fill out warranty cards."

EMBRACING E-COMMERCE

The mindful interactions are not limited to brick-and-mortar retailers alone — and that has been good business. "Established e-commerce dealers, as well as the brick-and-mortar retailers who have incorporated online sales into their selling strategy, have been generating the most growth for us," O'Donnell said.

Dealers say they appreciate the way the company embraces new revenue generators.

"One very specific thing about Hoshino USA is they show interest and respect for all the disparate channels in music retail," one Excellence voter said.

"Our dealers already have a clear understanding of their customers' needs," O'Donnell said. "I think our dealers sense that we're always working toward a shared success." —HB



From left: Roger Hart, Larry Dunn, Ed Miller and James Tsaptsinos

Power Portfolio

KMCMusiccorp nurtures thousands of partnerships

"Right now, everybody is trying to work harder and smarter to get ahead," said Roger Hart, vice president of merchandising at KMCMusiccorp, based in Bloomfield, Conn. "We are hoping for some expansion in the music products industry. Going ahead, we're trying to increase service levels with our dealers. We want to be the best partner possible."

Dealers around the nation have taken notice, singling out KMC both for its wide range of product and its overall efficiency. "I have been buying from them for many years with complete satisfaction," one nominating retailer wrote. "I give my rep an A-plus rating."

James Tsaptsinos, vice president of sales, said that his team's ongoing effort to be strong communicators was responsible for their success. "What we are trying to do is create a lot of profit opportunities for our customers," he said. "We can't maximize our opportunities with dealers unless we are listening to what their needs are."

KMC is the largest distributor and wholesaler of music products in North America, and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Fender, which purchased the company in 2007. In nominating KMC, retailers praised the company's high fill rate and timely delivery.

"We are all thankful for this nomination. We're not perfect but strive for perfection everyday," Tsaptsinos said. "I don't think anyone has nailed perfection yet. But we are always looking to come up with better processes to keep our fill rates up."

That, and a renewed focus on "high-focus, high-profit, high-turning product," as Hart put it, should ensure KMC's continued success. —DZ

Good Reception *Roland's new U.S. chief says the future will be guided by the past*

Nominating retailers this year heaped kudos on Roland for its openness to feedback. One independent retailer even pointed out that Roland execs have been amenable to “just about any idea for improvement.”

In late September, Roland Corp. U.S. appointed a new president and CEO, Kim Nunney, to carry on that tradition. He's served the company for more than 30 years in several positions, including president of Roland Canada. *Music Inc.* caught up with Nunney just two weeks into his tenure to chat about his plans for the organization — and how he aims to keep Roland receptive. Highlights:

MI: *What's your vision for Roland Corp. U.S.?*

KN: Continued success based on our core values. We'll continue to look for innovation in product. We'll continue to look at how we partner with and support dealers. And we'll continue to



Kim Nunney, new CEO, and Chris Bristol, Chairman

make sure we're educating and supporting customers.

MI: *Are there any upcoming initiatives that you can talk about?*

KN: We're going to continue our Power Programs initiative. That means a continued investment in training, events, merchandising, contests, education and support. These aren't just clever words. These are six integral initiatives that each create

opportunities. Specifically, we've got Roland University growing terrifically. That's an online and in-person learning initiative. It's very efficient for retail salespeople to participate in.

There's no one way [to serve dealers]. Everybody's working through different challenges. So that online e-learning is one of our most recent initiatives we'll keep going.

Let's not forget product innovation. Examples include the introduction of truly portable electronic percussion instruments with the new TD-4KP V-Drum, the continued expansion of our V-Guitar products and the expansion of the vocal products category through the new VT-12 vocal trainer.

MI: *Retailers have praised Roland for its dealer service. Roland is a large company. How do you create a culture and systems to maintain that level of service?*

KN: That's a great question. We talk internally and even globally about this fundamental Roland “whatever it takes” attitude. It's kind of an internal mantra. I think that was a function of what our founder, Mr. [Ikutaro] Takehashi, set in place. It's what our president, Kaz Tanaka, has sustained from Japan. And it exists in all Roland companies. I would say it's an ongoing history of leading by example, and everybody has fun doing it. —ZP



Keys to Success

Kawai continues to innovate — and win over its customers

Many dealers who nominated Kawai for this year's Supplier Excellence Awards praised the company's lineup of products as well as their excellent condition straight from the box. “Kawai produces an excellent line of finely made instruments,” said one dealer. “Consistent, reliable and their lineup is well-planned.”

Brian Chung, senior vice president of Kawai America, said the company has strived to be innovators in the industry over the past 40 years.

“Kawai has continually embraced new technologies and materials that have made our pianos better; the use of carbon fiber for key components of our piano action is a great example,” he said. “Today's piano customers understand the value of our technological advances more than ever. I suspect even our competitors respect us for our boldness and our willing-

ness to initiate significant change in order to ‘raise the bar’ for the piano as an art form.”

On top of the company's outstanding products, dealers also praised Kawai's outstanding people.

“You will never find nicer people in any company than the folks who work at Kawai America,” said one dealer. “Business is, ultimately, about relationships. The Kawai American family is a true partner to their retailer.”

“We have a slogan that states ‘We do not exist without our dealers,’” Chung said. “For us, it's equally important to recognize that we cannot be truly successful without dealers and salespeople who are faithful to our brand and will tell our story with passion. We can't thrive unless they do. This mindset helps everyone communicate with respect ... and it lays the foundation for great business relationships.” —JC



Brian Chung



Domestic Focus *Moving manufacturing to America has benefitted D'Addario and its retailers*

D'Addario has taken the trend of manufacturing products in the United States to a whole new level. And retailers have noticed.

"D'Addario has worked hard on not only reducing its prices, but also on having every item they offer made in the U.S.A., which when combined works to better a store's bottom line," said one retailer voter.

Today, approximately 95 percent of all D'Addario products are manufactured in United States. Company CEO Jim D'Addario said they are continuing to build new products here and re-shore those that can be competitively made in America. However, this action hasn't come without a price. "Moving some of our offshore products back to U.S. sources has been capital intensive," D'Addario said. "We've had to completely retool and redesign



Rico's Robert Polan (third from left) and D'Addario's Jim D'Addario (fourth from left) pose with artists at the Reserve launch party

some products to make them less labor intensive [in order] to succeed making them in America."

And the Farmingdale, N.Y.-based company began in earnest at an unlikely time. In 2008, when the economy began its down slide, D'Addario launched its internal program "Make It Here," an initiative which helps to decrease the amount of product produced overseas.

"We have always made all our strings, reeds and drumheads in America, but for competitive reasons we were forced to off-shore most of the Planet Waves

accessory line," D'Addario said.

Today, about half of the Planet Waves' line is manufactured here in the States.

"The good news is we're continuing to look at more ways to make more products here, and we are getting better and better at it," D'Addario said. "It may not be impossible to make all the products here, but we are always considering ways to do so."

VINTAGE INNOVATION

One product made in the United States is the new Rico Reserve mouthpiece. Manufactured at Rico's Los Angeles factory, the new mouthpiece was officially launched during a cocktail reception held in New York in mid-September.

"Old world craftsmanship meets new world innovation with the Reserve mouthpiece,"

D'Addario said. "Our goal was to not just recreate a vintage mouthpiece, but to make it available to all those who want to perform at a higher level and to do so affordably."

According to D'Addario, the new mouthpiece is the first of its kind — made from hard rubber that is 100-percent precision-milled.

Robert Polan, product manager for Rico, said retailers have been excited about the response from clarinetists. "Dealers are seeing repeat orders from players thanks to a strong word-of-mouth response," Polan said. "Social networking has given us instant visibility of what retailers have to say. Shops from Nevada to London have been posting positive reviews about the Reserve mouthpiece's quality and consistency." —KK



Refined Print

Hal Leonard keeps up with technology by tending to dealers

Hal Leonard, the world's largest supplier of print music, refined its online marketing to dealers and consumers in 2012.

The Milwaukee-headquartered company already had great success in recent years with its e-commerce shopping cart program, which lets customers shop for print titles at Halleonard.com and complete their purchases at a dealership of their choice. But over the past year, Hal Leonard has streamlined that system to the point of proactively reaching out to its online customers, helping them find what they want and making the purchasing process even easier.

"We're seeing terrific sales results, hundreds of thousands of dollars per month through participating retailers," said Larry Morton, president of Hal Leonard. "It's all done seamlessly so the consumer does not have to enter their information a second time. They pick out a store they want to check out through, they punch in their credit card

info and they're done. And retailers love it because often the local store doesn't have full e-commerce capability on their site. So, we are feeding them a lot of business."

Dealers also voiced their appreciation for

Hal Leonard's efforts to tie them in with new promotions and product development. "Hal Leonard is a partner to us in the truest sense of the word," said one nominating retailer. "They seek areas of common ground for us and offer products and promotions that will benefit both of our organizations."

One recent product innovation, a ukulele play-along kit, grew from a conversation the company had with a medium-sized dealer seeking a supplier of low-end ukes. "We sourced a low-end uke from China and packaged it with our ukulele method book, a play-along CD and a DVD in a triangle-shaped box," Morton said. "It turned into a whole line that dealers can now sell. We like to give merchandising options like that to our dealers."

And dealers like the company back. —EE



Larry Morton



Tabor Stamper

Custom Service

KHS America focuses on its end-users

Who are your customers? How do you best serve them? Revisiting these core questions has been key for Tabor Stamper, president of KHS America for the past six years. He says 2012 has been a year of making a concerted effort to help forge greater emotional connections with his company's end consumers.

Stamper says the company, headquartered in Mount Juliet, Tenn., began by engaging with KHS dealers, trying to promote a uniform, knowledgeable message about the brand. "We work hard at making sure each member of our team has a clear understanding of who we are and how each of us can contribute to who we are trying to be," said Stamper.

The company's latest hit, of course, has been the Mapex MyDentistry drum program (see page 58). "Our goal with MyDentistry has been to fulfill the desire of our customers to own a great quality customized drum set at an affordable price," said Stamper. "We didn't just assume this was what our customers wanted: We asked them." Retailers report success with the product line.

"Selling on quality, specifications, and price alone will not produce the results that we desire" Stamper said. "We believe our genuinely customer-centric approach is resonating with our retailers." —DW

► Outside the Lines

A storied guitar maker does other things, too

Taylor Guitars has been making first-rate instruments since 1974, but 2012 was exceptional for something else. This year, the El Cajon, Calif.-based company is especially proud of its Taylor Guitars University program as well as other efforts that take a wider look at growing the marketplace.

Designed as an opportunity for extensive product training, the University program lets dealers spend three days at the factory to learn more about the guitar line and, perhaps most impressively, be given an in-depth tour led by Bob Taylor, the company's co-founder. The end result?

"Dealers become authorities on Taylor's approach to making guitars," said Mike Montefusco, director of sales. "They return to their shops with a

deeper connection to Taylor and fortified product knowledge."

Taylor also runs Road Show and Find Your Kit events, which Montefusco said have been helpful to players and dealers alike: "For the player, it's like having a personal guitar consultant. For the dealer, we provide a factory-trained guitar expert to be a staff member for the day." These visits from company representatives help forge tighter bonds all around.

"By connecting with fans in a personal setting, we're able to garner first-hand feedback and guide players to the right guitar fit for them," Montefusco said. With about 70 attendees at each event and just over 400 held throughout the year, that's 28,000 customers and dealers reached directly. —DW



Taylor Road Show



Service Upgrades *New products and improved service have Conn-Selmer on the rise*

This year saw the culmination of a lot of hard work that started more than five years ago at Conn-Selmer. Band and orchestra retailers have begun to notice changes for the better in their dealings with the company, whose portfolio includes well-known brands like Selmer, Conn, King, Bach, Armstrong, Leblanc, Ludwig, Musser, Glaesel, Holton and Scherl & Roth. As one nominating retailer pointed out, “They have come back from their doldrums.”

“Five or six years ago, we put a system in place to track quality complaints and do it in a systematic way so we could fix them at the root cause,” said John

Stoner, Conn-Selmer president. “We also put in place a system to track our service levels to our dealers, both for made-to-stock items and made-to-order items. We’ve been getting better at both of those. At one time we were averaging almost 500 customer complaints per month; today that number is probably less than 40.

Product development has also been an attention-getter for Conn Selmer, which had a huge hit in 2012 with the pBone — a colored-plastic, entry-level trombone invented by musician Jiggs Whigham and introduced to rave reviews in 2011 (see page 60). “It far exceeded our expectations,” said Stoner. “People are having

fun with it: kids in pep bands, college alumni bands and people who play trombone in general. And the dealers love it because the margin on it is pretty good, and it does not negatively impact any other sale they might have.”

Also in the pipeline: 32 and 42 Series saxophones made in collaboration with Selmer Paris, which produces professional-line Selmer instruments. The horns will be introduced at The NAMM Show in January, along with a new line of Bach Artisan trombones and a Bach trumpet designed for mariachi players.

Conn-Selmer’s dedication to domestic manufacturing is also getting consumer attention. “We

are seeing an increase in demand for USA-made instruments — not just in this country, but in other areas as well,” Stoner said of the band instrument industry. “Ten years ago, I would not have said our quality distinguishes us from other manufacturers, but today I would say it does, especially in the student category where dealers get more years of life from their rental pools.”

Stoner sees Conn-Selmer’s long-term efforts to reposition itself as finally paying off: “We have [been] listening to what our dealers are saying, and we have the right people in place to execute the changes required to meet those expectations.” —EE



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All Together Now *Yamaha marks its 125th anniversary with a unified plan*



From left: Tom Sumner, Rick Young, Jay Schreiber and John Shalhoup

Throughout the recession, Yamaha Corp. of America has been focused on the “One Yamaha” initiative, encouraging cross-departmental planning, execution and communication in an effort to deliver better products and services to customers.

From the sound of Supplier Excellence voters, it’s working for Yamaha — the stalwart brand celebrating its 125th anniversary this year.

“Consistent, dependable, great quality, high consumer acceptance, great customer service, they work hard to win my business,” said a school music retailer, echoing Excellence nominations Yamaha received from every product segment.

In the U.S., a key factor driving One Yamaha has been rotating executives between divisions at the company’s Buena Park, Calif., headquarters, according to Rick Young, senior vice president for Yamaha Corp. of America.

“Having good communications with cus-

tomers is something that Yamaha has always worked on,” Young said. “But I think more recently, you can point to the One Yamaha effort. By making sure that we have taken down the walls between the divisions and moving people around, we have tried to make sure that our communication on the inside is as good as it can be.”

For Jay Schreiber, who came up through the B&O division before becoming general manager of PAC in 2011, seeing other divisions gave him a larger view of the company.

“All of a sudden you’re in a new environment,” Schreiber said. “But you recognize strengths that you didn’t even realize existed. You can connect some dots, not only for yourself, but also for other people in the company.”

Connecting those dots has created greater consistency and helped level the playing field at retail. For example, in researching Yamaha’s Excellence Award-winning THR10 amplifier (see page 55), the price shows up

at \$299.99 everywhere online.

“We spend a lot of time on MAP,” said Tom Sumner, senior vice president. “We have invested quite a bit in this area. We have a software system that we put into place several years ago. If somebody wants to fool around and do something crazy at midnight on Saturday, we still get it.”

“One of the benefits of circulating around and being familiar with multiple markets is that you become familiar with commonalities,” added John Shalhoup, chief marketing director. “And the commonality is that all of our channels and retailers are very concerned with our products and the profitability they bring to our retailers. It’s a priority for us to deliver the best possible case for distributing and selling our products.”

Out-of-the box product quality also figures in with retailers giving Yamaha high marks for consistency and innovation.

“A Yamaha [product] can be ordered for a customer with confidence because we know it will arrive from the factory in A-plus condition, and be consistent with the floor model,” said a keyboard retailer.

“That’s always good to hear,” said Paul Calvin, vice president of the keyboard division. “We know our dealers are challenged just to stock products and get set up on the floor and get them ready to sell. It’s got to be that way in order to get the high-level brand image that we want.” —FA

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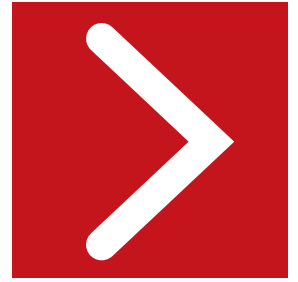
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LÀGGUITARS.COM

GEAR



VINTAGE GUITARS | VVB4SB

New Addition

Vintage Guitars has added the violin-shaped Vintage VVB4SB to its reissue bass range. This hollowbody comes in an antique sunburst finish, and features a spruce top with flame maple back and sides, and a hard maple set neck. The white pearl scratchplate sets the look off, and it boasts Wilkinson WDB bass pickups. jhs.co.uk



> InsideGEAR

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Eastwood Guitars teams up with Sailor Jerry
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Native Instruments debuts new control mixer
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EASTWOOD GUITARS | AIRLINE '59
CORONADO CUSTOM

Sailor Style

Eastwood Guitars and Sailor Jerry rum recently teamed up to create a limited-edition Airline '59 Coronado Custom guitar. The instrument is customized with vintage Sailor Jerry tattoo graphics on the front and back. The guitar also features a Vintage Cream tone-chambered mahogany body with a rosewood fingerboard. eastwoodguitars.com



RECORDING KING | RO-310 000

Recording King's Latest

Recording King's new all-solid Adirondack top is designed for players who want the increased volume and projection of an Adirondack top combined with the evenness of an OOO. With a thin C-profile mahogany neck and 1.75-inch nut width, the guitar is comfortable for fingerpicking or strumming. recordingking.com



PRS | P22, CUSTOM 24

Custom Shop

PRS has released limited runs of its Custom 24 and P22 models. The Custom 24 is the original PRS as well as the guitar Paul Reed Smith took to his first trade show in 1985. It features an artist-grade figured-maple top and an African mahogany back. The P22, introduced this year, is the company's first solid-body, piezo-equipped guitar. It's available in 10 finishes, including cherry vanilla burst (pictured). prsguitars.com



GEAR >

GUITARS, AMPS & ACCESSORIES

SOULDIER | ROOFTOP STRAP

Lennon's Signature

To honor John Lennon's 72nd birthday, Souldier has introduced the re-issue of his Rooftop strap. Used in Lennon's last public performance with The Beatles, the Rooftop strap is handmade in Chicago. souldier.us



K-Lever

Series of Partial Capos

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

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LEVY'S LEATHERS | STEAMPUNK STRAPS

Victorian Vogue

Levy's Leathers has honored Victorian sci-fi fashion with its new Steampunk series of guitar straps. Each 2-inch strap is constructed of polyester webbing and is sublimation-printed with a design of the sub-culture of Steampunk. The straps are finished with leather ends and a tri-glide adjustment. Pictured is model MPSP2. The straps are available in six designs. levysleathers.com

GENZ BENZ | NX2 SERIES

The New Neo

Genz Benz has debuted two NX2 series lightweight bass loudspeaker cabinets that replace its NeoX line. The new cabinets feature multiple improvements, including proprietary neodymium loudspeakers and an advanced cabinet design that adds strength yet reduces weight. genzbenz.com



DIGITECH | MAGIC FINGERS VIBRATO

DigiTech's Magic Fingers

DigiTech recently launched the Magic Fingers Vibrato for its iStomp programmable pedal. Magic Fingers takes a guitar signal and modulates its pitch slightly, giving it an animated vocal quality. digitech.com



TC ELECTRONIC | POLYTUNE NOIR

Noir Noise

TC Electronic has released the PolyTune Noir. The new tuner uses the same technology as the original PolyTune and shows the tuning state of all strings simultaneously when a guitar is strummed. The PolyTune Noir also features Drop-D and capo modes, as well as true bypass for zero tone coloration. tcelectronic.com




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AKG | DISCREET ACOUSTICS MODULAR PLUS

AKG's Acoustics

AKG has launched the Discreet Acoustics Modular Plus series. The Modular Plus series' interface module connects the gooseneck to the phantom power source, adding flexibility to all mounting modules. The self-cleaning connector is reliable, inconspicuous and safe — allowing for simplified and cost-effective microphone replacement. The goosenecks are tested under extreme circumstances ensuring their quality and flexibility.

{akg.com}



CERWIN-VEGA | P-SERIES

P.A. Powerhouse

Cerwin-Vega recently rolled out its new P-Series professional P.A. system, which includes the P1500X and the P1800SX. The P1500X is a two-way, bi-amped, full-range bass-reflex speaker. The P1800SX is a powered subwoofer, employing an 18-inch woofer with a custom 2,000-watt class-D amp. {cerwin-vega.com}



ELECTRIX | TWEAKER

Endless Tweakability

Electrix's new Tweaker is a performance controller for Ableton users, Traktor users, and music producers and performers. Tweaker gathers a variety of control elements in a compact, portable design that includes a 32-button grid, velocity-sensitive pads and push encoders with LED rings. Tweaker can be used as a stand-alone controller or as an add-on to any setup. {electrix-pro.com}





AURALEX | SHEETBLOK-AF

Total Isolation

Auralex celebrates its upcoming 35th anniversary with the new SheetBlok-AF Sound Isolation Barrier material. Intended as a solution for improved sound isolation between adjacent spaces, SheetBlok-AF can be used in studios, home theaters, apartments, listening spaces and offices. The material is a thin, dense isolator with a class A fire-rated PVC laminate on its surface for a finished aesthetic. SheetBlok-AF is supplied in 4- by 10-foot sheets that can be trimmed for custom fit. auralex.com

JDK AUDIO | V10, V12

JDK Scales Down

JDK Audio has released the V10 single-channel mic pre-amp and the V12 single-channel compressor. Both units are built in accordance with API's 500-series modular lunchbox format. The V10's circuit is identical to a single channel of the JDK R20 mic pre-amp, and the V12's circuit is identical to a single channel of the JDK R22 compressor. MSRP: \$695 each. apiaudio.com



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PROMARK | NEIL PEART CLOCKWORK STICK

Like Clockwork

ProMark's new Neil Peart Clockwork Angels Collector's Edition stick is available in a six-pack. The top-selling ProMark Shira Kashi oak drumsticks are autographed by drummer Neil Peart and copper-ink branded with six Rush tour logos. Each brick contains six pairs of sticks and collector's edition labels. promark.com

REMO | VERSA DRUMS

Worldly Release

Remo recently launched Versa Drums, a new line of world percussion products. The lightweight, nestable and compact Versa Drums feature technology engineered to create an easy, self-sealing fit with the Versa pretuned drumheads giving the drum rich bass tones. The instrument is offered in three large body shaped drums, including the djembe, timbau and tubano — all with the same bearing edge diameter and each with a corresponding drum-head. remo.com



AHEAD | LARS ULRICH SIGNATURE STICK

Sandman's Choice

Ahead Drumsticks has debuted its limited edition Lars Ulrich Scary Guy signature drumsticks, which feature a hand-drawn icon created by the Metallica drummer. The sticks are available in both the LU-SG Standard with silver logos and the LU-SGL Light with red logos. MSRP: \$36.49. aheadrumsticks.com



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NORD | ELECTRO 4

Nord's Latest

The new Nord Electro 4 features the flagship Nord C2D's B3 tone wheel organ engine. The model also includes a redesigned key-click simulation, as well as the rotary-speaker simulation of a vintage 122 unit. The percussion model has been improved to offer increased control over the percussion levels when playing near-legato. It also features Vox and Farfisa organ simulations and is compatible with the Nord piano library. nordkeyboards.com



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KORG | LIBRARIES

Korg Adds Seven

Korg recently announced the availability of seven additional expansion libraries and sample sound libraries for the Korg Kronos Music Workstation. The libraries include: EXs64 KARO Ethno World, EXs67 KARO Upright Piano by KARO, EXs90 Kronos Assault, EXs80 Vintage Synths, EXs 82 Hit Factory, KRS80 Soundtrack Mix and KRS81 Sonix Bliss. MSRP: Range from \$69-\$199. korg.com/kronos/soundlibraries



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NAMM YP is hosting a half-day workshop with the emerging leaders of the industry, featuring a keynote speech, a panel discussion, breakout sessions and a social hour.

Wednesday, January 23
Anaheim Marriott, Platinum Ballroom

Workshop

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| 1-1:10 p.m. | Welcome and Introduction |
| 1:15-2:30 p.m. | Keynote Speaker: An Industry Trailblazer |
| 2:30-2:40 p.m. | Break |
| 2:45-4 p.m. | Panel Discussion on Bridging the Generational Gap |
| 4:05-5 p.m. | Roundtables/ Discussions |

Networking Reception

5-6 p.m.

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and help us set the stage for the future

NAMM YP is looking for the best and brightest members of the industry to connect and set the stage for the future success of music products and services. Whether you're just joining the industry or have been in it all your life, NAMM YP is here to build a community of professionals and peers who can serve as a sounding board, inspiration, friends and more.

How can I get involved?

Getting involved is easy. You can start by using the information below to join and connect with NAMM YP. You can also attend some of NAMM YP's networking events at the 2013 NAMM Show in Anaheim.

What is NAMM YP?

NAMM YP's mission is to be the music industry's #1 group for young professionals to connect both in person and online and help provide mentorship and career development opportunities for those in the industry and interested in joining the industry.

Who is NAMM YP?

The group is comprised of young professionals that cover the entire spectrum of the industry including retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, distributors, service providers, salespeople, and more.

Why should I join NAMM YP?

By developing a stronger community of young professionals in the music industry, NAMM YP hopes to grow the industry from the ground up by giving emerging voices in the industry a chance to share their thoughts and ideas on how to make the industry more effective and vibrant in the 21st century.

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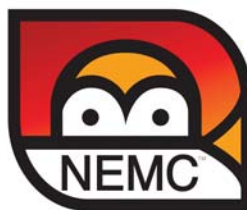
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Pure Acoustic has debuted the Linnd Laxo violin shoulder rest. The rest's exclusive design-registered form factor and patented solid crossbar eliminates splay and offers complete stability to both the rest and the instrument. The non-slip feet attach outside of the purfling line, placing no load or dampening on the back of the violin. linnd.co.uk



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THEODORE PRESSER | 'PSALM 42'

Critical Ives

Theodore Presser recently introduced the Charles Ives Society Critical Edition of *Ives' Psalm 42 (As Pants The Hart)* for SATB chorus, tenor or soprano solo, and organ. The piece was edited by Robert A.M. Ross, and the setting is a fairly traditional verse anthem with organ interludes and a vocal solo. MSRP: \$2.25. presser.com

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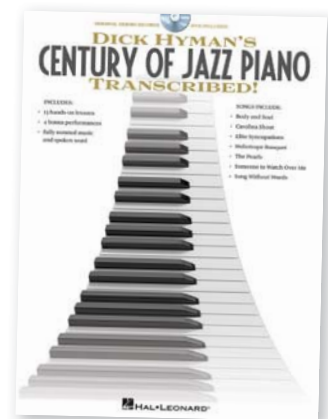
Percussion Bible

Sher Music has debuted *Afro-Peruvian Percussion Ensemble: From The Cajon To The Drum Set*. The book and DVD package contains charts with the specific rhythms played by the cajon, congas, cowbell, bongos, cajita and quijada, as well as bass and guitar parts, for major styles of Afro-Peruvian and Creole music. MSRP: \$30. shermusic.com

HAL LEONARD | 'CENTURY OF JAZZ PIANO'

Jazz Piano Updated

Hal Leonard has released *Dick Hyman's Century Of Jazz Piano — Transcribed!*, a book and DVD pack that presents a concise history of jazz piano. Thirteen hands-on lessons and four bonus performances explore the styles, musical vocabulary



and performers who have defined and shaped this American art form over the past century. This title provides a printed book with complete transcriptions of all of the DVD content. MSRP: \$27.99. halleonard.com



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AMERICAN AUDIO | MXR SERIES

Analog & Digital Mashup

American Audio's new AMXR series controllers give DJs a way to control their professional audio software without having to sacrifice the benefits of traditional DJ mixers. The three models in the lineup — the 10 MXR, 14 MXR and 19 MXR — deliver the tactile feel of classic analog DJ mixers and all the benefits of computer music programs. MIDIOLOG channel inputs offer a high level of functionality and flexibility, giving DJs and mobile entertainers the option of using MIDI or analog inputs on all available channels. americanaudio.us



NATIVE INSTRUMENTS | TRAKTOR KONTROL Z2

Double Trouble

Native Instruments recently launched Traktor Kontrol Z2, a 2+2 control mixer. Two stand alone channels provide connectivity for turntables or CDJs, while two additional channels offer control over Traktor Remix Decks, cue points and effects. The 24-bit sound card and XLR outputs deliver high-quality audio to club sound systems, and a separate booth output and microphone input let Kontrol Z2 integrate with any DJ booth. A built-in USB hub adds connectivity for additional controllers without having to use the host computer's USB ports. MSRP: \$899. native-instruments.com



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JONATHAN LIPP
FULL COMPASS

We have changed our model somewhat in the last year. It used to be that we had manufacturers here in our three training rooms every day. Now we have gone to a biweekly, early-hours, more scheduled training system, with less interruption in the day for our salespeople. Since we sell nationally to many different markets, it's not like classic MI retail where nobody is there for half of your day. We're busy from the minute we open until the minute we close.

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I have my employees coordinate between each other. I have a staff of 22 people, including sales, support, and shipping and receiving, and everyone contributes. We meet once or twice per week and shoot around ideas. We've really built a culture.

BEN KRAFT
KRAFT MUSIC

We have lots of work ahead of us and plenty of learning to do, but we always stress that the devil is in the details, and we must always do the right thing for customers and vendors. All I's are dotted and all T's are crossed on our site, and we measure as much as we can to keep tabs on all business activities. We regard our relationships with our vendors as imperative to our success, and we hire smart, motivated individuals who have a spark for the music industry.

“Be Extraordinary.”

ROBIN WALENTA
WEST MUSIC

Our internal theme is “Be Extraordinary,” and that’s also our brand in the marketplace: “Our Extraordinary Associates.” I’m surrounded by passionate, creative employees, and they come to work every day wanting to make a difference in the lives of our customers. So this year, I have commissioned a custom-designed ukulele that has the West Music logo on it, and it also says “Be Extraordinary.” I am giving one to every single employee at West Music. I have a back stock, so when every new hire goes through their onboarding process, they’ll receive a ukulele at the end of their first week. We’ll also have classes, so by the end of the next week, they’ll not only know how to play it, but they’ll also have their own custom-made one.



**“There’s lots
of business
out there.”**

CHUCK SURACK
SWEETWATER SOUND

If you’re a sales guy in the bottom half of the sales chart, you have more sales training from 8–9 a.m. every Monday morning. It’s about [learning how to] work our systems and institutional sales. It’s not product-based; it’s just knowing your customers better. If we had time, we’d cold call, but we don’t have enough sales guys trained to handle the 2 million customers we have in our database now. We have 150 sales representatives, each with about 3,000 or 4,000 customers on average. They can’t deal with many more than that if we expect them to call a customer every day, every week or every month — depending on the customer’s buying patterns. We’re not even close to hitting everybody in our database. That’s the reason I’m confident that there’s lots of business out there.



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