

IT'S A LOCK: BAGS AND CASES

P.61

FOR PROGRESSIVE MUSIC RETAILERS

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LAUREN
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HOLIDAY PROMOS THAT WORK

P.39

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P.34

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IN YOUR STORE?**

P.36

**HOW TO HAVE
CONVERSATIONS
WITH CUSTOMERS**

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INSIDE *FEATURES*

COVER STORY

39 HOLIDAY PROMOS THAT WORK

Panelists from the Summer NAMM Retail Summit dish the details on promotions that kept their registers ringing all holiday season — and well into January.

BY KATIE KAILUS
AND DAVID ZIVAN

FEATURES

48 FROM THE TOP

Crystal Morris, president of Gator Cases, discusses management, family life and the usefulness of the karate studio next door.

BY MICHAEL GALLANT

52 WALK-THROUGH

Contemporary Music Center's new performance space has all the kids rocking.

BY DAVID ZIVAN

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INSIDE *DEPARTMENTS*



14

IDEAS

33 INDEPENDENT RETAIL

Injecting principles of good conversation into your selling can revolutionize the way you treat your customers.

By Ted Eschliman

34 LESSONS LEARNED

Make sure to maintain a concise and clear vision of what you want your business to be.

By Gerson Rosenbloom

36 MY TURN

The former Guitar Center exec on how GC worked to make female associates and customers feel comfortable in a male-dominated industry.

By Gene Joly

GEAR

61 MARKET FOCUS: BAGS & CASES

Gator Cases goes rugged with its new G-TOUR addition

66 GUITARS, AMPS & ACCESSORIES

Vox takes its rhythm on the road

74 AUDIO & RECORDING

Mackie redesigns its MRmk3 monitors

76 DRUMS & PERCUSSION

Gretsch's new Club Street kit brings big sound in a compact size



80 BAND & ORCHESTRA

Knilling's BowMate gives violinists extra comfort when playing

82 PRINT, MULTIMEDIA & GIFTS

Lick Library goes back to the 1980s

ASK THE RETAILER

90 HOW DO YOU SPIFF YOUR STAFF FOR THE HOLIDAYS?

Retailers sound off on how they spread the holiday cheer amongst their staff.

Cover photo by Kevin Kopanski

RETAIL

PROFILE

14 Clawson's Music celebrates the big 5-0.

NEWS

- 16** Gist Piano Center visits a whole new world
- 18** Industry veteran Richard Rejino joins Crouch
- 20** A Louisiana retailer adds jambalaya to a Taylor jam; Full Compass Systems sponsors Opera in the Park

SUPPLY

PROFILE

24 Armadillo rejuvenates its brands, while putting retailers first.

NEWS

- 26** NAMM Musikmesse Russia announces new dates and location
- 28** Kawai piano tech receives a hall of fame award
- 30** Framus and Warwick make updates to site



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PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY DAVID ZIVAN

KEEPING IT FAIR

What you need — you know I got it.

— A. FRANKLIN

We editors have a phrase — “over the transom” — used to describe material that arrives on our desks unsolicited. That’s the polite term we use, anyway. Generally, for me and for other editors, the term is synonymous with, “off their rocker” and “into the wastebasket.”



But you catch a break sometimes. An essay that arrived recently from Gene Joly caught my attention right away, and I haven’t stopped thinking about it. (After a long tenure with Guitar Center, Joly was recently named president of Musician’s Friend. See page 16.) His article (see page 36) centers around an initiative GC began several years ago to study the experience of women in music retail, as customers and as employees. Joly undertook the ongoing project in partnership with Laura Taylor, a longtime guitar player and GC’s vice president of operations — and so I spoke with her to get some further perspective. One riveting thing about their discoveries, and why they ought to matter to you, is that there are lots of dollars at stake.

“We had been looking at our demographics, and working on a lot of customer segmentation, and we saw that the female musician population has grown [a great deal] in the past decade or two, but the music industry really hasn’t,” Taylor told me. “Every survey we looked at told us that the female musician population is somewhere in the 30 percent range, but our market share was quite a bit less than that.”

There is nothing quite as vexing to a big retailer as clear evidence of money being left on a table somewhere. It ought to vex every one of us.

The issue, of course, is multi-faceted. Female customers told GC that they often felt uncomfortable coming into their stores, that they visited “when they had to,” and even then tried to bring their boyfriends with them. No less troubling from a business point of view, though perhaps more difficult to address, was the fact that the chain’s female associates in general reported fine workplace conditions — except for the boorish behavior of customers. As a result, at least in part, GC was recording an average tenure for male sales associates at 2.5 years, and for females at 1.5 years. It’s no surprise, therefore, that just 8 percent of GC’s overall sales force is female; longer tenure leads to promotion, which boosts retention.

So what does all this mean for your operation? For one thing, a candid conversation with your staff might be in order. When a man and a woman walk into your store together, how are they greeted? Does your staff assume that the man is the customer? Statistics prove that assumption might be wrong, and you could lose a sale (or three or four) as a result. **MI**

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LETTERS

A Big Thanks From 'North of the Border'

I would like to extend a big "thank you" to *Music Inc.* Editor David Zivan for taking the time to come up and visit our store, Cosmo Music, north of the border in Richmond Hill, Ontario, and profiling us in the September cover story "Northern Star."

Our entire staff works tirelessly at providing the ultimate customer experience to every person who walks through our doors. Everyone here at Cosmo Music is truly honored to be recognized for all of their efforts in such a great industry trade magazine.

Mark Hebert
CEO
Cosmo Music
Richmond Hill, Ontario



Cuthrell's 'Radical Plan' Reaches UK

I think that Billy Cuthrell's July cover story in *Music Inc.* "A New Way to Win?" is principally a fantastic idea. Not only will it negate the price comparison culture, but it will also help to

reconnect customers with their local music centers.

This means we as independents will not only sell more instruments, but we will also expand our tuition and increase foot traffic and consequently sales on smaller high-margin items. It would seem from our point of view, even if a big box decided to run the scheme, they couldn't appeal to customers from the area, which again is positive and in turn should result in more musicians being given the tools to be supported and succeed.

One concern is that if the whole industry goes down this route, we could end up with a very confused consumer trying to compare deals. A more specific concern for us is that, should we

run the program, it would not be cost effective to chase anyone who decided to stop turning up to their lessons as we simply don't have the resources or the weight of a large company bearing down on them. This could put us more at risk to people folding on their contracts.

I believe there are also issues with how the revenue is managed to maximize the feasibility of the scheme and its profitability.

Tom Griggs
Icon Music
Melton Mowbray, U.K.

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- > **Final Chapter**
Illinois print dealer closes
PAGE 16
- > **It Was Like a Dream**
Guitarist John Petrucci visits
Sweetwater Sound
PAGE 19
- > **Jambalaya Jam**
Louisiana dealer hosts a tasty
Taylor event
PAGE 20



RETAIL

CLAWSON'S MUSIC | BY JOHN JANOWIAK

CLAWSON'S REACHES 50

Step into Clawson's Music in Corpus Christi, Texas, and amongst the abundant guitar displays, you're sure to meet at least one friendly, musical guy named Bob.

It could be the Bob Clawson who launched the business in 1963 with his wife, Barbara, and continues to work there at age 79. It could be their son, Bob Jr. (better known as Bubba), who started working there at age 10 and now manages the store. Or it could be Bubba's son, Bob III ("Bobby"), who started helping out at age 9 and is now, at 27, an integral member of the family business. (Someday, your greeter will likely be the fourth-generation Bob — Bobby's son, Bob IV ("Bo"), though at 2 years old he is not yet quite to shelf-stocking height.)

"It's Bob, Bubba, Bobby and Bo," said Robert Clawson Sr., known as Bob. "We've all got the same names. And then Barbara is the main one," Bob said of his wife with a laugh. "She keeps us all in line!"

Today the 7,000-square-foot freestanding operation is located along Texas State Highway 358 near the southernmost point of the state. But the roots of Clawson's Music go back to the early 1960s, when Barbara began



The five "B"s of Clawson's Music.

teaching her son to play guitar. Already a talented singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist about to embark on a successful country-and-western career, Barbara clearly had a knack for teaching, too. Bubba was only 5, but he took to the guitar immediately. Friends in the neighborhood wanted in on the fun, and soon Barbara had 15 students on her hands.

The teaching business picked up so fast that their house couldn't accommodate it all. So Bob rented a building to serve as a studio, and "in a short period of time,

we were selling guitar strings and guitars," he said. "It took off from there. And 50 years later, we have 1,200 guitars on the wall."

And plenty of drums, keyboards and accessories, too. "We have an extremely large inventory," Bob said. "I always learned that you can't sell out of an empty wagon."

As the teaching studio blossomed into a successful retail operation, Barbara's musical career hit its stride. She landed a recording contract in Nashville, Tenn., and recorded a number of popular songs, the biggest called

"One Bud Wiser." She toured constantly, with Bob as a member of her band. "We just utilized that money that was coming from there to put in the store, and the store just got larger and larger and larger," Bob said. "I had good help at that time, and while we were gone, they ran the store."

STORMY WEATHER

All was well until August 1970, when Hurricane Celia laid waste to Corpus Christi. When the family returned to the store the following morning, nothing was left but the slab



The store currently stocks some 1,200 guitars.



Bob on the phone in 1974.

foundation. "Everything was gone. When I say gone, I mean ... gone!" Bob said. The insurance came in and there wasn't anything there to see, so they just wrote us a check for what should have been there."

The operation moved to their current location on S.P.I.D. (South Padre Island Dr.) in 1974, and they've been there ever since, with a teaching studio across town. For a decade or so, Bubba followed in his mother's footsteps and enjoyed a touring career as a solo artist. When he decided to return from the road, Bob put him in charge of the store — though he and Barbara still work there, with no plans of retiring.

"Business is super great," Bob said.

"I keep hearing about the downturns in the economy, and I see where small independent dealers are going out of business every day, but that hasn't been the case with us. We have increased business every year, I suppose. We've never been late on a bill. We pay in 10 days because we want that extra 2-5 percent."

What's kept them going so long? Bob credits his faith, and his family's dedication to treating customers right. "I believe you treat a customer exactly the way you'd like to be treated. Every customer is special. Every one of them that comes in that door comes in for a purpose, and we treat them that way." **MI**



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Brookdale Music Closes Doors

After two decades in business, Naperville, Ill.-based Brookdale Music has closed. The full-line retailer was best known for its extensive print selection.

Owner Jack Mogan told the *Chicago Tribune* that closing the store had not been an easy decision. "It's emotional," he said. "Like putting up a child for adoption."

The company opened in 1993 in a 3,000-square-foot location, and moved to its most recent, 9,000-square-foot store in 2001.

Gene Joly Named President of Musician's Friend

In September, Guitar Center named longtime executive Gene Joly as the new president of its Musician's Friend division. In his new position, Joly will be responsible for guiding the direction of Musician's Friend while capitalizing on his extensive experience in merchandising, vendor relations, distribution, supply management and direct marketing. Prior to his appointment, Joly was Guitar Center's executive vice president of stores.

Replacing Joly as the new Senior Vice President of stores will be longtime GC operations veteran Kevin Kazubowski.

"There's no doubt that Gene is the man to lead Musician's Friend as 2014 approaches," said Mike Pratt, CEO of Guitar Center. "Over his 38-year career in the MI industry, he has earned the respect and trust of our entire organization and countless others across our industry. I'm looking forward to watching Gene put his own unique stamp on the company as its next president, and I wish him continued success."

Founded in 1983, Musician's Friend is a wholly owned subsidiary of Guitar Center.



GIST HOSTS 'HAPPIEST RECITAL ON EARTH'

Gist Piano Center in Louisville, Ky., recently hosted more than 40 music students for "The Happiest Recital on Earth!," a celebration of music from Disney films. Students performed their favorite Disney tunes while dressed as their favorite Disney characters.

"The Happiest Recital on Earth"

is a chance for students to share and explore the music that drove many of them to learn an instrument in the first place," said Heather Hamilton, director of education for Gist Piano Center. "Revisiting these magical memories is a great way to remind all of us why we love making music and sharing it with our families. It's a great way to keep kids on the piano all summer long."

After their performance, each student took a keepsake photo in "Mickey's Magic Photo Booth," a green-screen environment designed to superimpose their photos onto their favorite Disney backgrounds.

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After 30 years in the print music retail industry, Richard Rejino has joined Madeleine Crouch & Co., Inc. as an account executive.

From 1989 until 2006, Rejino was vice president of Brook Mays Print Music and managed 18 print locations. Most recently, he was manager of the Pender's Music location in Dallas. Rejino has been active as a member of the Retail Print Music Dealers Association (RPMDA) since 1991 and served as a board member and as president from 1999-2004. He was elected to the NAMM Board of Directors for a three-year term in 2004.



IN MEMORIAM

Walther Veerkamp

Walther Veerkamp, the son of the founder of Casa Veerkamp, one of the most respected and oldest music



retailers in Mexico, died in August. His father, who was born in Germany, opened a small music retail store in Mexico City in 1908. Walther worked in the company his entire life and helped develop the business over the years. He was proud when his son, Thomas, joined the business. Walther was a passionate member of the music industry and appears in the NAMM Oral History collection.

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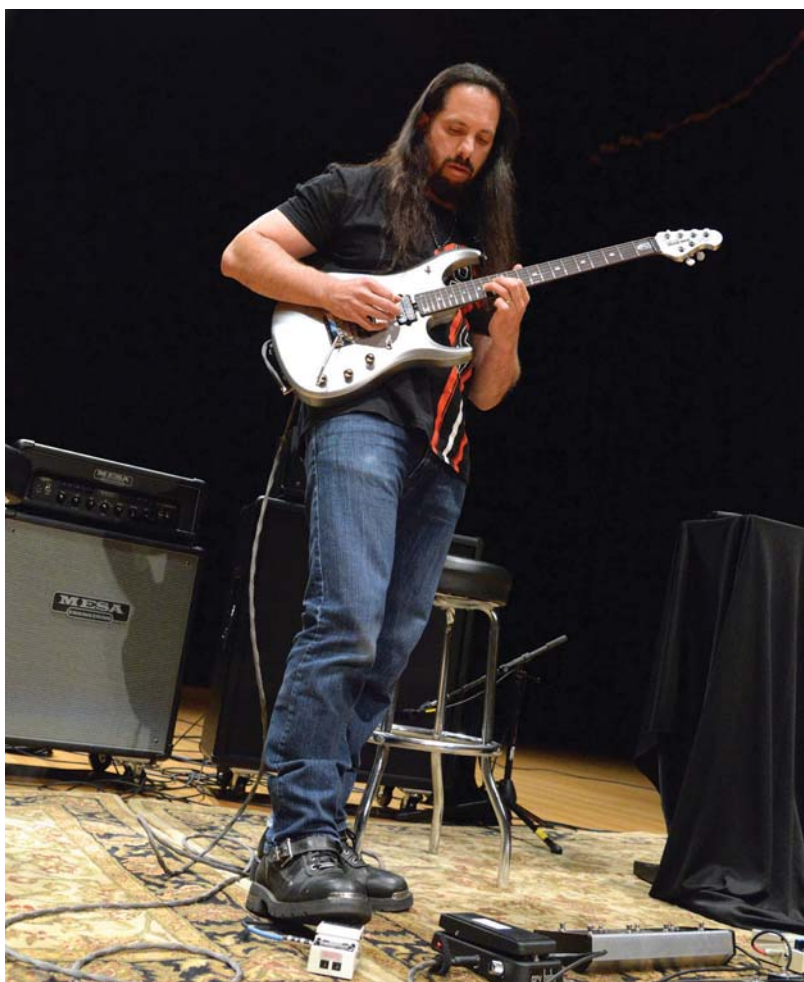
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Petrucci Jams at Sweetwater

Sweetwater Sound recently hosted Dream Theater guitarist John Petrucci (bottom) for a show in the company's Performance Theatre. He played solo and with Sterling Ball (at right), owner of Music Man guitars.



Guitar & Musical Instrument Repair Tags



Walking Bird

Two Repair Forms for the Musical Instrument Industry. The first form (**Part #GRP**) is designed for technicians working primarily on guitars and other string instruments. It has services pre-listed in an organized concise format.

The 2nd repair form (**Part #MINP**) has none of the services pre-listed. This is perfect for those who prefer to write in the work to be done. It can be used, as well, for instruments other than guitars as there is more room to specify work to be done. Carbonless paper, 3 full parts and 2 Product ID Stubs are included.

Both forms are available **WITH** your **STORE IMPRINT** (name, address, phone and website) or **WITHOUT** the store imprint.

A sample of a Guitar Repair Tag form from Walking Bird. The form includes fields for company name, address, city, state, zip code, phone number, and advertising line. It also has a section for parts or service, with a list of common guitar repair tasks such as "BASIC SETUP", "RESTRING", "ADJUST NECK/TRUSS ROD", "ADJUST BRIDGE", "ADJUST ACTION", "ADJUST PU HEIGHT", "INSPECT/CLEAN NUT SLOTS", "POLISH Frets", "OIL FINGERBOARD", and "ADJUST TO PITCH". The form is designed to be used as a repair tag for musical instruments.

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Music Inc. of La. Hosts Taylor Event

In August, NAMM Top 100 dealer Music Inc. of Louisiana hosted a Taylor Guitar “Find your Fit” event at its location in Gonzales, La. Along with live entertainment, the company also provided free jambalaya cooked by 2013 World Champion, Scott Duplechein.

“As a new Taylor dealer we were very excited to host this event and share it with the community,” said Brandt Bourque, the store’s owner. “The event was a home run: turnout was great, we sold a few guitars and people really enjoyed themselves.”

The event also included a drawing for a Taylor GS Mini, which was won by Thalan Broussard, pictured at right with Bourque.



FULL COMPASS SPONSORS OPERA IN THE PARK

Full Compass Systems of Madison, Wis., recently sponsored the 12th annual “Opera in the Park” in its home city. The company has been a major sponsor of the free event since its inception in 2001, providing sustaining financial contributions, free equipment rentals and many hours of audio expertise.

Under the direction of Maestro John DeMain, a number of performers offered selections from Madison Opera’s upcoming productions of Puccini’s “Tosca,” Donizetti’s “The Daughter of the Regiment” and a groundbreaking modern American opera, Heggie’s “Dead Man Walking.”



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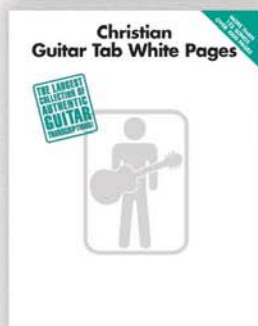
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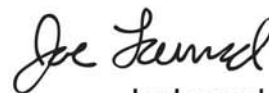
The most important things in life tend to be very simple, and we usually mess it up when we try to get too complicated. In my opinion, creating opportunities for people of all ages to play music *with* others and *for* others is simply the most important key to future industry growth.

Can you remember that feeling of picking up your first instrument, learning just enough to make a little sound out of it and then wanting to share what you learned with whoever was close by—parents, siblings (or pets!)? As you got a little better, you might have had the chance to play in a school concert, in a garage band or at church. Regardless of your own unique experiences, our industry is full of people who fell in love with music and how it made them feel.

I saw this firsthand recently at Skip's Music, where many industry friends gathered for their 33rd annual Stairway to Stardom concert. Fourteen new bands "graduated" from this summer program, a Weekend Warrior band played intermission and, while the judges tallied the results, a new program Skip calls 'Rockcital' featured students from his lesson program playing together in a band. In traveling as your industry rep, I've seen the impact of people playing together in school bands, rock bands, Mariachi bands, New Horizons Bands and thousands of kids banging away in our Museum of Making Music. Closer to home, the Fishing Musician's group of industry friends had its annual trip a few weeks ago, and the emails flying around beforehand were not about fishing but what songs we should practice for the evening jams.

Our industry has the unique privilege of helping people make music, yet are we doing enough? Can we do more to create opportunities in our stores for making music? Can we do a better job of welcoming different demographics and age groups into the fold? It is a challenging question (and a bit rhetorical because, of course, the answer is YES!), but imagine what our industry would look like if every NAMM Member made this a core component of their strategy.

We're coming up on the 50th anniversary milestone of what may have been the largest market-creating moment in history. On February 9, 1964, Ed Sullivan introduced The Beatles to an estimated TV audience of 73 million Americans (nearly 60 percent of the U.S. population at the time) and virtually overnight the demand for musical instruments exceeded supply, by a mile. Garage bands sprung up and our industry served a whole new generation of customers. If every NAMM Member shifted a part of their energy to creating opportunities and places for people to play, the impact would far exceed that fateful night on the "Ed Sullivan Show."



Joe Lamond
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- > **Alfred**
Joins forces with MakeMusic
PAGE 26
- > **NAMM Musikmesse Russia**
Releases new dates and location
PAGE 26
- > **Fender**
Gets down with Snoop Lion
PAGE 28
- > **Zildjian**
Names new VP
PAGE 30

SUPPLY

ARMADILLO | BY FRANK ALKYER

BROADER APPEAL

When Elliott Robinson, CEO and founder of Armadillo Enterprises, bought the Dean Guitars brand back in 1997, he didn't start with much — beyond the company's reputation for making heavy metal instruments.

"When we bought Dean Guitars, it was basically out of business," Robinson said. "We bought the logo and a couple of trademarks, the N.L. body, and the V headstock. That's all I got for my money."

"Of course, we relaunched the company, and it was so entrenched in being a pointy guitar company that to this day, we're still fighting it. Acoustic guitars are a huge part of our business, as well as banjos, mandolins, resonators, round electrics and conventional electrics. We do so many things, yet so many people look at us as just a metal guitar company."

Not that Robinson and his staff aren't proud of that tradition, one that includes the guitars of the late Dimebag Darrell Abbott as well as Dave Mustaine and Michael Shenker. It's more about seeing opportunities throughout the guitar community.



Dean's Elliott Robinson, left, and Josh Maloney, flank TV host and guitarist Jimmy Fallon.

Robinson said their solution was to develop products no one had seen before.

"We started coming out with quilt tops and flame tops and cool inlays and Grover tuners. In '97 and '98, nobody was doing those things. Since then, everybody's hopped on the bandwagon."

"But that's how we started. That's how we got our foot in the door with dealers on the acoustic guitar front — as well as the acoustic bass front. To this day, we're still coming out with innovative things like the Aphex circuitry in our pre-amps, which we have an exclusive deal for now."

DDRUM APPEAL

The same broadening efforts are happening with Armadillo's ddrum brand, a line that was originally known for its electronic drum kits, but became associated with metal after coming under the Armadillo umbrella.

Curse Mackey, Armadillo's marketing director, said the line was starting to be thought of as the drum extension of the Dean line — not a bad starting point, but the Armadillo team said, again, they were missing opportunities.

"We basically made a hard right turn," Mackey said. "We first had to get a cohesive team."

Then, by design, shake it up."

Leading that team is Josh Touchton, ddrum division manager, a veteran of D'Addario and Mapex. Touchton said the challenge with reinvigorating the brand was not to rest on the laurels of ddrum's history and to pay hyper-attention to quality control.

"We're still working our way through that," Tutchin said. "We almost had to cut ties with ourselves and start over with the goal of taking a really great drum company that was known for one thing and open it up to everybody."

Part of that is better vigilance

regarding trends, including drummers wanting shallower kits, working with new woods, and experimenting with finishes and colors. But a larger effort, Tutchin said, has been to reach out to drummers from pop to rock to country and beyond, demonstrating new models and the brand's new thinking.

LUNA FOR ALL

Armadillo also owns and distributes the Luna guitar line, known as one of the brands at the forefront of the "girl" guitar movement, complete with peace sign sound holes and tattoo inspired guitar-top designs.

"With Luna, we said, 'Let's do a girl guitar line,'" Robinson said. "Because the only one out there at the time was Daisy Rock.

We found that the girl market by itself isn't big enough, plus half the warranty cards coming back were from guys. So that line has naturally expanded."

Luna teamed up with stained-glass artist Yvonne de Villiers, who had designed panels all over the Tampa, Fla., area, where Armadillo is based.

"She's the one who delivered the creative backbone of Luna, and also the lifestyle component," Robinson said. "She has this thing called the Luna Tribe with throngs of people who are loyal Luna players. They just love her message and the whole peace symbol thing."

RETAILERS FIRST

Before founding Armadillo, Robinson was the owner

of Thoroughbred Music, a fast-growing retail chain that he sold to Sam Ash after making some expansion miscues in the 1990s. Robinson said he still misses retail, but carries the lessons learned with him.

His 10,000-square-foot warehouse and showroom in Tampa offer proof that he still knows how to display gear, something he loves to share with his retail customers. The facility also houses the Dean custom shop, which builds 500 instruments a year, giving customers access to the same luthiers who build guitars for Shenger and Mustaine.

And going back to the company's value model, Robinson said his retail mentality is one of the company's secret weapons.

"When we design a product,

the first thing we do is look at the competition and say, 'OK, this is a similar product, a set-neck guitar with EMG pickups with this Floyd Rose tuner. What's the market price? OK, it seems to be settling in at \$599. Now, the dealer needs to make 40 points to be happy. So, the dealer cost has to be \$360. And we have to find a way to be profitable at selling to the dealer for that.

"We try to work from the retail sale down. And we also understand MAP pricing. It amazes me when I see MAP pricing for \$609.50. That's somebody who doesn't understand retail — \$609 is \$599. If a price is \$629, how many more would you sell if the first number was a '5'? That's what you gain from working retail all those years." **MI**

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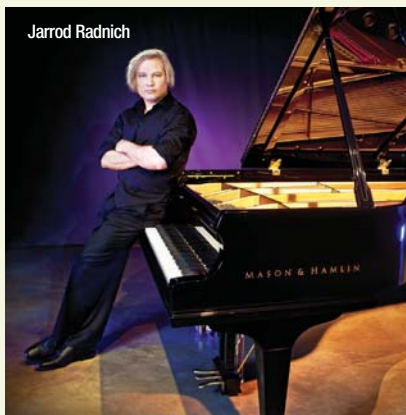
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CHARITY

**MASON & HAMLIN
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Mason & Hamlin donated a new concert grand piano to the Hi-Desert Cultural Center in Joshua Tree, Calif.

"Not only is this the finest piano to ever grace the Cultural Center, but it is also of a quality simply not found in most performing arts venues," said Cultural Center President Jarrod Radnich. "A piano of this consequence is rare and is the type of instrument on which the most accomplished artists truly desire to perform. We intend to utilize this drawing power and our recording system to bring in artists who otherwise simply would not be attainable." **{masonhamlin.com}**

DISTRIBUTION

**Hal Leonard Distributes
Kendor Digital Products**

Digital products from Kendor Music will now be available through Hal Leonard. Music dealers will have access to Kendor titles through the Hal Leonard Digital Retailer program. Kendor digital publications will also be available through Hal Leonard websites, such as sheetmusicdirect.com, bandmusicdirect.com, and orchestramusicdirect.com, as well as in apps and eBooks.

"We are proud that Hal Leonard envisions Kendor Music as a company that has the type of products that will enhance the Hal Leonard digital offerings," said Kendor Music President Craig Cornwall. "We feel that Hal Leonard's superior marketing ability, along with their sophisticated digital security, will be an excellent solution for Kendor's digital products." **{halleonard.com}**

ALFRED | DISTRIBUTION

Alfred, MakeMusic Enter Agreement

Alfred Music recently became the sole distributor of MakeMusic in North America, India, Australia and New Zealand for Finale and Garritan products.

"We see a powerful synergy in partnering with the world's largest educational music publisher, both in terms of vision as well as markets and distribution," said Karen VanDerBosch, MakeMusic CEO. "Our mutual commitment to innovation will continue to drive both companies in exciting new directions as we help musicians around the world enjoy the creation and performance of music."

"Alfred Music has been licensing content with MakeMusic for many years, and we are thrilled to expand our relationship with them," said Ron Manus, Alfred Music CEO. "They have developed an incredible line of music technology products that play an instrumental role in the way the world composes, teaches, learns and performs music. With our state-of-the-art distribution center and our amazing sales and marketing staff, Alfred Music is able to offer a dynamic environment that will distribute these physical and digital products to a wider audience." **{alfred.com}**



NAMM | EVENT

NAMM Musikmesse Russia Announces New Dates, Location

NAMM Musikmesse Russia and Prolight + Sound NAMM Russia will now be held at a new time of year, September 18-21 and September 18-20, 2014 respectively.

The two conventions will also be held in a new venue, the IEC Crocus Expo in Moscow.

The 2014 edition will include new elements for participants and

will target higher participation of Russian and foreign exhibitors, as well as from CIS countries.

According to a release from NAMM, both the timing and the location have been adjusted to best fit the growing needs of the music product and pro-light and sound industries in the region. **{namm-musikmesse.ru; proligh-namm.ru}**

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KAWAI | AWARD

Kawai Tech Receives Hall of Fame Award

Don Mannino, director of field services for Shigeru Kawai Pianos, recently received the Hall of Fame award from the Piano Technicians Guild (PTG) at their annual convention and technical institute held in Chicago. The Hall of Fame award is presented to only one or two piano technicians each year. According to the PTG, the award is given "to honor those who have shared their talents, time and loyalty with our profession so that we may have what is ours today." kawaius.com



Don Mannino

NAMM | FUNDRAISER

MoMM Raises \$40K at Gala

The Museum of Making Music (MoMM) raised more than \$40,000 at its August 23 gala auction, which featured a live and silent auctions, as well as a performance by Santana vocalist Greg Walker. The funds raised from the auctions, which included a variety of donated music products, such as electric and acoustic guitars, a Celtic harp, a banjo, ukuleles, music lessons, and music books, help offset the \$60,000 annual cost of operating the Museum's many educational programs.

"This outpouring of generosity from the Museum community helps insure that the Museum will be able to continue to do its part to open doors to music making for people of any age," said Carolyn Grant, the museum executive director. "Access to music is what the museum strives for, and we are supremely grateful for the support of this cause in which we so deeply believe." namm.org; museumofmusicmaking.org



Marlon Williams and Snoop Lion

FENDER | ARTIST APPROVED

SNOOP LION RAPS IT UP AT FENDER

Rapper Snoop Lion, formerly known as Snoop Dogg, recently visited the Fender Artist Showroom in Burbank, Calif., and created an improv rap inspired by Fender guitars. Snoop Lion was accompanied by guitarist Marlon Williams, and the two freestyled a nearly three-minute rap that recalled some of Williams' famous riffs. fender.com



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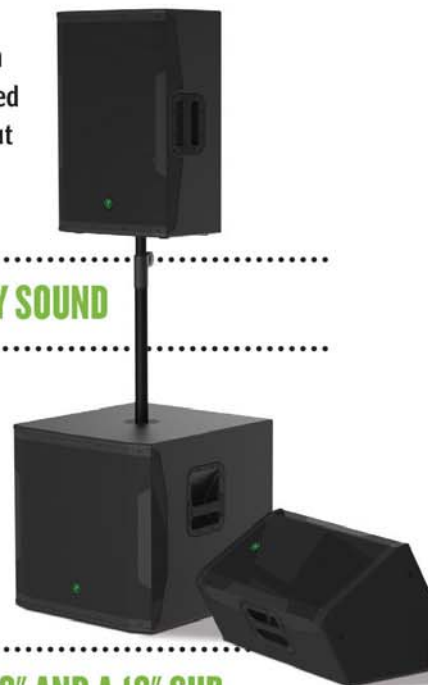


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WEBNEWS



Pearl Partners With Shopatron

Pearldrums.com has now incorporated Shopatron. Percussionists across the United States now have the ability to purchase Pearl products online, while continuing to support local music stores. Customers can choose to purchase an item via an online shopping cart, and the order will be routed to the nearest dealers who can fulfill the order. Customers can pick the item up in-store or have it delivered. pearldrums.com



Framus, Warwick Update Site

When Framus and Warwick debuted their new website back in April, the company was met with a sizeable response from customers, dealers and fans, including a large number of e-mails containing feedback and constructive criticism for the site. Now, Framus and Warwick have updated and optimized the website, which went live on Aug. 26. It now offers improved usability and a refined layout. warwick.de

D'ADDARIO | RELOCATION

D'Addario Relocates Steel Wire Manufacturing

D'Addario is transitioning its Renaissance Wire division from Oxford, Mass., to Farmingdale, N.Y.

Targeted for completion in early 2014, the multi-million dollar modernization plan includes relocation and re-engineering the entire process for producing the high carbon steel music wire.

The company makes more than 700,000 strings daily and employs 800 at its Long Island facilities. This move will add an additional 25 positions in New York

and will be located in space freed up through its continuous lean manufacturing transformation.

"D'Addario has built its reputation on pioneering innovation," said John D'Addario III, D'Addario president. "We realized that there is significant opportunity to improve the quality of our string's raw materials and have decided to invest heavily in this area, to insure that our company holds the technology lead in our core business, string making." daddario.com



APPOINTMENTS

Zildjian Names New VP

Zildjian has announced Mark Sapienza will join its management team as executive vice president, overseeing the company's sales, marketing, and product management functions worldwide. Mark will be based at the company's Norwell, Mass., headquarters.

"We are very fortunate to have someone with Mark's extensive experience in sales, marketing, and product management join our executive team," said Zildjian CEO Craigie Zildjian. "Mark will play a key role in positioning Zildjian for future growth."



Fishman has appointed Bill Norton as vice president of retail sales.

Harman's Crown Audio has named Craig Lambrecht business segment manager, commercial audio and portable P.A. Harman also appointed David McKinney, a Harman veteran, to the position of Harman

senior director for China operations. McKinney will lead the continued development of Harman's China team and drive growth by providing specialized systems and technologies to suit all strata and all vertical markets of the Chinese professional entertainment and production markets.

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IDEAS

Inside**IDEAS** > Lessons Learned Page 34 > My Turn Page 36

INDEPENDENT RETAIL | BY TED ESCHLIMAN

CONVERSATION MANIFESTO

People of Earth: Right around the time of Y2K, four marketing and technology voices printed an astounding guide to contemporary business called the “Cluetrain Manifesto.” The guide explained how marketers, consumers and organizations should embrace the new communication of the 21st century.

The book contains 95 theses that — even 14 years later — still present a relevant case for how business would be/and is different from any previous age because of online marketing and the rapid advance of the Internet. If you haven’t had the chance to familiarize yourself with these principles, you can find them for free at cluetrain.com/#manifesto.

The theses could easily be condensed to a dozen practical tips on how people shop and gather information, and as breakthrough as it was then, many of these ideas are mainstream today. For example, No. 12 states: “The networked market knows more than companies do about their own products,” or, No. 16: “Already, companies that speak in the language of the pitch, the dog-and-pony show, are no longer speaking to anyone.”



Inject the principles of good conversation into your selling

My favorite is the very first thesis, and it’s one that can pretty much sum up everything we do in marketing, advertising and servicing our customers. It reads: “Markets are conversations.” But what does this mean, “conversation?” Here are some principles:

Conversations are balanced. One party shouldn’t incessantly speak louder than the

other. We resent being drowned out by others’ ideas. If we can’t get our contextual needs addressed, we’ll never take anything away from a conversation.

Conversations are respectful of others, even in disagreement. There are many ways to skin a cat, and in the music world, rarely are there absolutes. Personal taste and opinion reigns: there are many and some stink. At the very worst we can agree to disagree.

Conversations don’t always involve two of equal intelligence or knowledge, but the stronger should never lord it over the weaker. Nobody likes a know-it-all. We crave advice, but we never want to feel stupid in the process.

Conversations grow from listening and reciprocation. “Two ears, one mouth” as the saying goes, and the good Lord intended us to respect this ratio. Way too many people pass the opportunity for reconnaissance because they’re either too busy talking, or thinking of the next thing to say while the other is talking. Listening shortens the path to solution.

Conversations are always honest. Tactful yes, but never deceitful. Once you’re caught

in a lie, you can never go back.

Conversations exist outside of and don’t require profit, but profit is not a bad thing. We never need apologize for making an honest buck. Most often a disagreement is not about price, but value. Not everyone is greedy. The good customers will pay for a true benefit when effectively explained.

Good conversations enlighten. Better conversations encourage and uplift.

What if we took these points and substituted the word “selling” for “conversation?” This would frame these principles in a very relevant way. “Selling” is conversation and builds off listening and reciprocation. We think of marketing as formal and institutional. What the Internet has done for nearly two decades is break down these corporate, organizational walls, and put marketing into the hands of the individual.

Injecting the principles of good conversation into your selling can revolutionize the way you treat customers and how they will respond to you. **MI**

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

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

Fly Like The Eagles

I'm a huge fan of The Eagles. I think it's quite remarkable how every member is an amazing songwriter, absurdly good player and fabulous vocalist. It's almost unfair. Recently I drove to Louisville, Ky., for the launch of their latest tour, The History of the Eagles. Who knew it would be a great business lesson?

I watched the legions of loyal fans stand in huge lines to buy concert-wear, CD box sets and DVDs — all after spending a LOT of money on tickets. That brought into focus that the Eagles are more than a talented and entertaining band; they are a very successful business enterprise.

Now, that is. "The History of the Eagles" is the history of a business that went from being on the brink of extinction to becoming one of the all-time success stories. Talk about lessons to be learned.

CAUGHT UP IN THE RACE

The band's first record had three Top 40 hits and they were among the top-selling bands in the world. But by their own admission, they grew too quickly, and lost control. In your business, you need to have a carefully crafted plan that matches your growth rate. Lesson learned: Growth is good if controlled.

Even before any of their songs made the charts, they had their own lessons to learn. They listened to Jackson Browne writing in the apartment below theirs. He would play the same phrases over and over again until he molded them into a well-crafted song. Lesson learned: A hit (or business success) comes to those willing to persist until they get it right. Do you give up too easily? Do you have the stamina to keep at it until you reach your goals?

EVERYTHING. ALL THE TIME.

As The Eagles evolved, some of their legendary arguments centered on style. Some members wanted the band to be primarily country, while others leaned towards rock. Eventually this lack of consistent vision contributed to the band's breakup. When they reunited in 1994, their lesson learned was to know what kind of band they would be and who was running the show.

Do you have a clear, concise vision of what you want your

business to be? Is there a clear-cut leader who doggedly keeps the company on course?

OUTRAGEOUS PARTIES

Another factor that contributed to the band's initial breakup was their frequent use of controlled substances. Success bred an attitude that they could do any diversionary thing they liked without consequence. While I'm not suggesting that music dealers are doing drugs (at least not all of them!), the not-so-literal interpretation is that there are distractions that keep dealers from being keenly focused on the things that make a business successful. The Eagles learned their lesson. When they reunited, controlled substances were specifically banned from all band activities.

In the video version of "The History of the Eagles," Don Henley speaks about the changes that the band needed to make. "Getting back together, we realized that this is not a hobby, not a game, and not a pleasant diversion. This is a calling ... a career."

Lesson learned: the health of your business dictates that you treat it like the professional enterprise that it needs to be. Do it right, and who knows ... maybe people will line up to buy YOUR T-shirts! **MI**

Gerson Rosenbloom is the vice president of strategic management at Sweetwater Sound and a past NAMM chairman. E-mail him at gersonmusicinc@gmail.com.



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MY TURN | BY GENE JOLY

Balancing Acts

For the 38 years I've been in the music products industry, it has been male-dominated. And I've never really understood why.

I'm a child of the '60s and the oldest of eight children. Some of my earliest and fondest memories are of my mom bringing home the latest Beatles or Monkees album. I can tell you, my five sisters were every bit as excited as my brothers and I. Perhaps more excited. Similarly, my wife loves music as much as I do; our two daughters love music as much as our son. I've never seen any stats indicating that women are any less passionate than men about music. I don't believe the stats exist.

So, why the large disparity in music participation? (To be clear, I'm not talking about marching band, orchestra, chorale, etc. Women are well-represented in these groups. I'm talking about playing guitar, bass, drums, keyboards, etc.)

TROUBLE ON THE FLOOR?

In late 2008, after I became head of stores for Guitar Center, Laura Taylor, GC's highest-ranking operations executive, and I began an initiative to solve the "women in music" problem. Inspired by the guitar-playing prowess of Lita Ford, Laura had moved to Los Angeles in 1989 to attend The Guitar Institute of Technology (now the Musician's Institute) and hone her craft. Her journey eventually led her to Guitar Center and a successful retail career.

After Laura and I decided to analyze the participation of women in music, we first looked at our transaction data. Our behavioral data shows us that women constitute only 15 to 20 percent of our retail customer base, and 35 percent of

our online customer base. Yet females make up more than 50 percent of the population. And there is the core question: Why the gap? Laura started reaching out to customers, store associates, vendors, trade press, girls' rock camps, women's music forums, and the like. Her mantra-like question, "If women love music, why don't more of them play?"

One early conclusion was obvious: music stores are predominantly staffed by men. When women are inspired by a musical artist and want to try out and learn about musical gear, they have frequently felt uncomfortable in what have often seemed, in effect, like men's locker rooms.

Some in the industry might say, well, women can shop online. And indeed, as our data shows, women are better represented among our online customers. But that solution hardly seems an effective or equitable business strategy. E-commerce sites may not have an off-putting locker room vibe, but they also don't provide much opportunity for musical discovery and the forging of lasting and productive customer relationships.

How many women over the years have been inspired to start playing guitar or drums but were put off by the locker room? How many millions of dollars have we left on the table? How do we fix this problem?

CHANGE BEGINS AT HOME

We started from within. We trained our managers and store associates to treat female customers the way they want to be treated: equal to men, no better, no worse. Female customers told us they'd be more comfortable if we had more women working in our stores, so we stepped up our efforts to



'How many women over the years have been inspired to start playing but were put off by the locker room?'

recruit more female sales associates. We surveyed our growing female sales force and were glad to find out they overwhelmingly liked their manager and their co-workers.

Recently, however, our research uncovered a distressing new insight: A majority of our female associates deplore the behavior of some male customers. It bears repeating: their CUSTOMERS, not associates. Not all of them, mind you, but enough of them that the average female sales associate's tenure is a full year less than the average male associate's.

Condescending remarks are a common problem, and some male customers simply refuse to deal with a female sales associate because they assume, with

'We are launching an initiative to train our female sales associates to never suffer in silence, and we are teaching both our male and female managers how to handle customers who behave badly.'

prejudice, that she has no expertise. But the most deplorable problem is sexual taunting — lewd remarks, pinching, poking, and the like.

So now we are launching an initiative to train our female sales associates to never suffer in silence, and we are teaching both our male and female managers how to handle customers

who behave badly. Physical contact of this nature is absolutely unacceptable.

I invite other retailers to join us in this effort. If we are united in policing and banning such behavior, we can put a stop to it and make our industry a more inviting place for musically inspired women.

While we're at it, certain

guitar manufacturers could stop running ads that feature scantily-clad female models. Their products can stand on their own — they don't need sex to sell guitars. At least one guitar magazine should clean up their act as well.

Expanding the number of female musicians will be fantastic for the musical art form — new voices, new vision, new styles, new energy — and by extension, new customers for the music products industry. A substantial percentage of our GC Studios music students are young women. Let's stop chasing them away. We owe it to our art form, to our industry and to the women in our lives. **MI**

Gene Joly was recently named President of Musician's Friend.

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HOLIDAY PROMOS THAT WORK NOW

BY KATIE KAILUS AND DAVID ZIVAN



It's no news that Retail Boot Camp, NAMM University and all the other educational offerings at the NAMM shows are useful — but this year's summer show's Retail Summit had dealers talking: real-world tips on holiday promotions that boost sales.

We went back to those expert speakers and got a few more details. And they've shared their ideas here in their own words.

So get started. It's not too late to implement your own version of these successful strategies — and make the fourth quarter a holiday season to remember.

ROYAL SAVINGS

Lauren Haas-Amanfoh, president and COO of *Royalton Music Center*, a full-line retailer located in North Royalton, Ohio, modeled her holiday rebate promotion on Kohl's Cash, a popular program at the department store chain. And the rebates kept her register ringing all Q1.

We have a core band and orchestra side of the store as well as a combo department, so we did two promotions that were similar. At the end of the year, many manufacturers in the band and orchestra segment did rebates for customers on step-up and professional instruments, such as Bach, Yamaha and Jupiter. So we did a matching rebate. For every \$100 you spent on a separate transaction, you'd get a \$25 dollar rebate. If you spent \$500, you got a \$50 rebate. If you spent \$1,000 you got a \$100 rebate.

And that was to be used during the first quarter of the following year. Most customers who are buying a step-up or a pro instrument are usually spending more than \$1,000. So, with the rebate program, they

are getting a \$100 rebate from the manufacturer and a \$100 rebate from us. And they are getting promotional financing.

It helped us because we didn't have to discount as low as we may have had to before. Because of the rebates, it was very obvious that they were already getting \$200 off. It was nice because we could stay very close to or at MAP, and not lose profit from that standpoint.

On the combo side of our business, we did a different set of promotions that also depended on how much and what you purchased. Every new guitar came with a free set of strings of your choice and a strap. Guitars over \$300 got a really nice gig bag, not just the one that came in the package or something. When buying a drum set you got a free drum throne and sticks. With

keyboards you got a free keyboard stand and a book up to \$30. So, basically, customers didn't have to buy anything else additional apart from the instrument they were already buying.

I wanted to take the focus away from big boxes and not compete with stores, such as Best Buy or Guitar Center. What makes us different from big boxes is that we have hundreds of guitars on the walls that are unique. I would much rather sell one of those than a guitar pack that everybody is selling. I wanted to move the individual guitars. The customer felt like, "Oh, I get a nice padded gig bag? And not a junky see-through bag?"

It sort of surprised a lot of people. They got to make their own guitar packages and walk around the store and choose what strap they wanted and what picks they wanted, and not just

take one that a manufacturer had already chosen for them. It made them feel involved and special.

And we offered rebates on these as well. If you bought a nicer guitar and you were over \$1,000 you still got a \$100 rebate. The rebate was universal. You could use it on lessons, repairs or accessories. We used it as an opportunity to get a private lesson after getting that instrument.

The promotion worked really well, especially with the combo department. Our single guitar sales grew 300 percent. It's interesting that throughout 2013 our combo sales and our professional sales have both continued to grow. People who didn't buy during the holidays remembered us or discovered us for the first time through the advertisements, and that continued to give us some momentum.

We are planning on doing this again this year. It was neat because all those people you were seeing during the holiday season you then saw again during the first quarter, and the time frame was short enough that you still remembered them and they remembered you. The other benefit was we increased fretted traffic and they got to know our luthier who was a new addition to our staff. He has really drawn a following because of that promotion. He's currently on track to do six times the fretted repairs that we have ever done before.



RMC REBATES

GOAL: "To get more business through the door during the slow Q1."

COST: Advertising (in the local newspaper and on TV), and the cost of the used rebates.

OUTCOME: "It was neat because all of the people you saw during the holiday season you saw again during the first quarter. They were still very excited and positive about their new instruments, so it was great to interact with them again so soon."

ANY CHANGES?: "We will do it again."

STEP RIGHT UP!

Most of the action for *Robert M. Sides Family Music Centers*, a four-location business in Pennsylvania and New York, takes place during back-to-school B&O rentals. **Peter Sides**, president, and his team wanted to take better advantage of the holidays. So they started over.

About three years ago we kind of threw out everything we'd done before. The flier we had been sending drove accessories and combo business, but people didn't open up the newspaper and go, "Wow! A top line saxophone! Yeah, I want it!"

So we took a page out of what we did for pianos, and made it an event. We put posters up in October and November all designed around what we called our Top Line Step-Up Showcases. With four stores, we did four consecutive days — Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. We sent direct mail invitations to current rental customers within a certain range of concluding their contracts, and also to people who recently paid off. We also worked through our teachers, having them book appointments on those four days.

There was some real synergy there, because we had four or five manufacturer vendors at all four locations. They're already running their rebates and financing specials during that time of the year. They set up tables with instruments that aren't part of our normal stock. That attracted

people to come into our store saying, "I've never seen this before."

Of course, if you want a manufacturer rep to be in your store you've got to plan way in advance and show them the plan that you've put in place to justify their time and expense. It takes organization on your part

to make it worthwhile.

I just talked to some friends in the motorcycle business. They have helmet-fitting nights. Customers go to their motorcycle dealer and try them on. "Oh, this one's too small, this one's going to be perfect for you," and of course at that point you're buying the helmet that you've tried. It's perfect for you. You're not going to walk out. The idea is to use that momentum to make customers feel like they're getting something very special, something unique, something really customized for them.

The fact that we had so much inventory there brought the people in. It's really on you and your staff to qualify people because that selection quickly becomes a deterrent and a confusing thing. But we were impressed because we were able to pull off a low 80-percent closing ratio.

The end result of the four days was 56 instruments, and we're not in major markets. Of those, 25 were step-up rentals. If you're not doing any type of step-up conversion rental program, I'd really encourage you to look at how you can incorporate that.

It makes a difference. You can't go to the parent of a 5th grader and say, "Hey, you want a \$2,000 trumpet?" They'll look at you like you're crazy! So we've got to get those people out here. The point-of-sale software makes that easy to do.

TOP LINE STEP-UP SHOWCASES

GOAL: To get step-up instruments into the hands of ready students, even if only on a rental program.

COST: Around \$3,500

RESULT: 56 instruments moved

ANY CHANGES: "This year we're going to have our Williamsport, Pa., store do it on a Saturday instead of a weeknight, because we think people will drive further on a Saturday. That store generates a disproportionate amount of our revenue, and we've had a Monday night last year and did about the same as a smaller store."



SHOWING OFF

Jeff Mozingo, CEO of *Mozingo Music*, a two-location operation outside St. Louis, sees 1,300 students per week. The best of them are invited to perform in the stores on Saturdays during December — and they, in turn, invite everyone who might be looking for some ideas for presents.

Any student can volunteer to be a part of our Holiday Showcase. They perform in the store, either in our performance venue or on the sales floor, every Saturday. Kids are coming in, friends and parents and grandparents are watching them play and there is traffic throughout the store all day long. We have perhaps 10 minutes of performance, then a 15 or 20 minute break. It depends on how busy we are. You still have to be able to talk with customers.

We get information from the people they bring. If they haven't come into the store before we always ask them for their contact information and we say, "Would you like to have a free trial lesson?"

We take it to the next level by having a Christmas tree in each location, and the students can take an ornament and write their name on it with their wish list, so when their family comes in they pull those off the tree and then they've got the list right there. It works great.

HOLIDAY SHOWCASE

GOAL: "It was really about having live music during the holidays."

COST: "There really isn't any. All the stuff is in stock — we have chairs and music stands."

RESULT: "We'll probably gain 100 or 120 students."

ANY CHANGES: "This year we're going to integrate video from the first Saturday into the second Saturday."

A MONTH OF FRIDAYS

At *Larry's Music Center* in Ohio, store manager **Gabriel O'Brien says, more is better. So why keep Black Friday deals to just one day?**

In the fourth quarter you are not just competing against traditional music stores. You are competing against everyone. Consumers have a set amount of holiday dollars to spend on gifts, and our goal is always to get those first. So the idea was to encourage people to come out and get our Black Friday sales price every Friday for the whole month of November. And then, in essence, we would get those sales first.

We had the best November we've ever had. We all have a pretty good idea of what we think we're going to do in the fourth quarter, and the faster you get to it, everything after that is just gravy.

We're in something of a rural area, so on Black Friday when many stores have these big doorbusters, our customers are more likely to leave town. So if we can get them before then, we get the dollars that are already spoken for.

Fourth quarter, it's kind of guerilla marketing time. You're putting your resources where they'll do the most good. And when you have customers coming in knowing they're going to get a good deal, they will add on accessories and things. And since so much stuff is moving out the staff is energized and your store is more organized and looking better because you constantly have to move things around which is that much nicer for everyone coming in.

MORE BLACK FRIDAYS

GOAL: "The big thing about the holidays for me is — well, don't you hate it? What if it was super easy? You can just have 15 percent off your entire purchase, with no restrictions."

COST: "Not much. The newspaper ads, and some small radio posts."

RESULT: Best November ever.

ANY CHANGES: "I don't do the same ad twice. But the main thing is I think we'll expand the layaway terms to give everyone a chance to get their gear."



GET CARDED

Ted Brown Music, a five-location Tacoma, Wash.-based retailer, used to offer holiday shoppers a gift card when they purchased a gift card. Last year, **Whitney Brown-Grisaffi**, president, decided to offer the benefit with any \$50 spent — and saw return customers throughout January.

Last year, we decided to hold a Black November. During that month, customers got a \$5 gift card for every \$50 they spent. They could then return during January and redeem their gift cards. The cards were printed on card stock, similar to business cards. We had a few limits on the cards, such as they couldn't be used towards rentals, repairs or sale items. We also encouraged people to re-gift them. We said, "Go ahead and give them away. They make a great stocking stuffer."

We handed out about 2,711 cards. We saw a terrific return on these, about 69 percent. And, of that, 3 percent were new customers. Overall, it was a really simple promotion. One thing we did, though, was we did not accept any cards after they expired. We plan on doing this promotion again this holiday.

BLACK NOVEMBER GIFT CARDS

GOAL: To increase January in-store traffic.

COST: Printer's bill for the cards.

OUTCOME: "We saw a 69 percent return on the cards, and, of that, 3 percent were new customers."

ANY CHANGES: "No, we're planning on doing it again."

ALERT THE MEDIA

Ryan West, senior vice president at Iowa-based **West Music**, partnered with local media to help draw crowds to its stores during the holiday season.

One thing that we've seen success with is partnering with our local media. When you're doing a local media buy, they are always looking for the next great story. The power and impact of music makes such an incredible feel-good story. We've said, "OK, we're going to go ahead and buy a block of radio," and then we'd reach out to the content side of the station, and say, "You know, we've got this fantastic story for you." We'll put together a press release, and what we found was the station will usually show

up at the store, do some mentions on the air, and even do a live broadcast.

We got lucky on Black Friday several years ago. People were lined up outside, waiting to get into the store and the radio station where we did our media buy did a live broadcast with the people in line and asked customers about their purchases. "I just got my first guitar," the customer responded, and they really captured the energy. Customers were excited, the station was excited, everybody won. It's meaningful because it's an authentic experience.

MEDIA BUYS

GOAL: "To start relationships that last past the holidays."

COST: Variable in each market.

OUTCOME: "More people through the doors."

ANY CHANGES: "Start earlier and maintain the momentum."

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RIDE THE WAVE

Chris Johnson, who had worked at *Musician's Superstore* in Westminster, Colo., for 25 years, took over the business last summer — and opened in a new building just in time for last year's Black Friday. It's a tradition at the store, and they go big.

I think we all underestimate how much our customers like to come to our stores. In many cases they would really prefer to be in our music stores as opposed to being somewhere else, in one of those lines. So we do a lot of promotion for Black Friday. We do door-buster deals, we give away free T-shirts, five-dollar guitar stands: We do all kinds of crazy things to try to get the customer in the store on Black Friday.

We open at 8 a.m. We don't try to do the 4-in-the-morning thing. Our customers don't want to come in at 4 a.m. We find that customers come in based on our catalog and our deals. It's a huge traffic builder for us, and great for employee morale to get the season kicked off. In 2012, we actually moved our store into a new location and we held the grand opening on Black Friday which was great.

We had 75 people lined up at 8 a.m.

We do two weeks of cable TV advertising prior to the promotion. We do email broadcasts every weekend prior to that, and

our direct mail piece. We try to get it to hit actually the Tuesday or the Wednesday before, because our hope is people are sitting at home with their catalog on Thanksgiving or the day before

BLACK FRIDAY!

GOAL: To start the fourth quarter with a bang. "Black Friday is almost like a track meet, where somebody has fired the starting gun."

COST: "We definitely put money into promotion and into the blowout deals. We'll be selling things at cost or just a bit below. I look at it as a marketing cost."

RESULT: "It's a tough question to answer because the sale goes through Christmas. The promotional money goes forward. But we're always busy."

ANY CHANGES: "We've done this as long as I can remember, and we've refined it to certain things we do that work. Last year I had the benefit of the grand opening. And now that excitement will be gone. But I can do an anniversary!"

looking at it going, "OK, I've gotta get in there on Friday."

We have a Walmart across the street from us. And for most of our customers — if they are out shopping that day — it's very likely that they are going to be in that Walmart. And they want to be here. It's a music store. The other stuff is stuff they do for their family.

So, a lot of customers who come in over that weekend are basically taking a break from their other shopping. They're out buying gifts for other people, but they stop into our store because they know we have a sale. We're giving them a reason to come in.

Often we find that if we didn't sell something that day to people, we have a huge number of customers who come in, look at the items in our catalog, and see what's here. They get a preview of "Here's what I want for the holidays" or "Here's the type of gift I'd like to get."

And so they bring their family members in with them and what ends up happening is those people come back a week or two later, and purchase those gifts. We get big sales during that weekend, and it also gives our customers an opportunity to shop for products that maybe they're not going to buy for themselves, but somebody else is going to come back and buy it for them a couple days later.



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FROM THE TOP

CRYSTAL MORRIS | GATOR CASES

INTERVIEWED BY MICHAEL GALLANT

HOW DO YOU START YOUR DAY?

I have two kids, so I'm rushing to get them to school by 8 a.m. and not really having breakfast — maybe a smoothie if I'm lucky. Once I'm at the office, I get organized. As much as I try to do things on the computer, I still like handwritten notes, so I normally jot out the top five or 10 items that have to get accomplished that day. I also believe in management by walking around, so at the beginning of the day, and multiple times later, I like to check in with everyone.

WHAT DO YOU TALK ABOUT DURING THOSE CHECK-INS?

How sales went the day before, customer feedback, new releases and how new products are doing, big orders, things like that. A lot of it is operational — are we getting orders turned around quickly enough, and are there any shipping problems that we need to deal with? We talk about personal things like families and kids, too. Pretty much everyone in the office is in a band, so we talk about where they're playing out and what's going on musically.

SOME MANAGERS TRY TO BE BEST FRIENDS WITH EMPLOYEES AND OTHERS SEEM TO WANT RELATIONSHIPS TO BE PURELY BUSINESS. IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE TAKING A MIDDLE ROAD.

A lot of people at Gator have been with us since the very beginning. We've done a lot of traveling and spent a lot of time together, so I very much consider them friends and am invested in our lives together. At the same time, my responsibility is to make sure that the company does well, so occasionally, I'll have to bridge that gap, be a little harder, and make sure everyone's on task. Gator has a great responsibility — we are providing income to over 60 families — so we still have to get business done, even when we're friends.

SO YOU'VE HAD TO BREAK OUT THE TOUGH LOVE SOMETIMES.

My goal is to catch problems during their infancy, before they turn into something big. Unfortunately, those discussions do have to happen sometimes, and they're obviously not fun for anybody.

YOU CO-FOUNDED GATOR WITH YOUR FATHER. WHAT LED UP TO THE DECISION TO WORK TOGETHER?

After I graduated from college, I spent a year on this junket of learning in the music product field. I worked with a distributor in Argentina, a freight company in Miami, a dealer, and then I held a position in marketing for a couple of years before going back to business school. At the same time, my father owned a company that repped a lot of musical instrument companies and one of them made cases. When he and that case company went their separate ways, it became apparent that maybe he and I

should do our own thing. It was an opportunity to work together on something that we both really knew about.

DOES THE NAME "GATOR" HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT YOU LIVE IN FLORIDA?

Not really. [Laughs.] We wanted to come up with a fun logo, something strong, and we started going through names. You know, maybe because we are in Florida, the name stuck more than it would have otherwise — but what we were really going for was a logo that could speak to the products being tough and durable.

WHEN YOU WERE JUST GETTING GATOR STARTED, HOW DID YOU AND YOUR FATHER DIVIDE DUTIES?

For the first eight or nine years of it, we had very different roles. I oversaw operations and marketing, and he handled sales and product development. Over the last few years, he's taken on more of an advisory role, so I've been digging more into what he used to cover. It's really fun to design products and see ideas come together.

WHAT'S IT BEEN LIKE WORKING SO CLOSELY WITH HIM?

It's a great partnership, and I've learned so much from him, especially since he's a real sales animal. Plus he traveled a lot when I was growing up, so it's been a pleasure to spend so much time with him as an adult. Working as president now, I feel like I'm following in big footsteps — my father's been in the music industry for more than 40 years and creating my own road, and building my own relationships, has been a challenge. Two years ago, for example, I joined the NAMM board, and that's been a great way to meet different leaders in the industry.

QUALITY-TESTING YOUR CASES MUST BE FUN.

Absolutely! We've had people drag cases behind their cars and run them over. Friday afternoon is our fun testing time — "Okay, who wants to go hit it with a hammer?" We have a great group of people who like to work together, so that helps make it a good time.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STANDARDIZED TESTS YOU DO?

One is a drop test, where a weighted metal object with a point is suspended 5, 8, or 10 feet in the air. When we drop the object, at what height does it begin to dent the case? We also do heat testing. A lot of the specific tests depend on the use and requirements of the product itself.

CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE?

Next to us in our parking lot is a karate studio. When we were testing a case for an LCD television, we had one of their black



THE DETAILS

CRYSTAL MORRIS

*President and co-founder
Gator Cases*

HQ: Tampa, Fla.

FOUNDED: 2000

EMPLOYEES: 64

BEST-SELLER: Gator GC
series guitar cases

FUN FACT: Gator now manu-
factures and sells over 1,000
products around the world.

belt teachers try to kick the side in, just to see if the case would be strong enough to protect its contents. Then we took someone's Jeep and had them ram into it. That was a pretty fun day.

YOU MENTIONED ENJOYING PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT —

We bring out 50-plus products a year. I like to focus on functional design, brand presentation — and I'm big into what I call "humanization" of what we build and manufacture. We get people who are smaller and bigger, thinner and wider, to try our different products. Is this case comfortable to carry once you put the gear in it? If you're pulling a mixer around in one of our cases, is it practical to actually wheel it into a venue for gig? This kind of testing is very important to creating a great product and an area where I like to get really involved.

SO ARE YOU EVER THE ONE DRAGGING A MIXER UP AND DOWN THE HALLWAYS?

All the time! I want to go out and sell our products and I want to believe in what we are selling, so I absolutely try everything out myself. Just yesterday, I was testing a bag that has backpack straps. I was dressed for a meeting, but I still had the backpack straps on, running up and down the stairs and taking it outside, just making sure that, once you put weight in it, the bag still feels good. Last time I was in China, all of the workers at the factory were laughing at me because I was outside, hammering relentlessly on a guitar case, trying to figure out if there was any difference in the types of plastics we were using. How do you know something unless you do it yourself?

WHAT ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT RIGHT NOW?

We just launched an entire line of musical instrument stands. Though we have standard fare, we tried to do a couple of things differently. Everything is ergonomically designed. We also worked with an industrial design firm on a new stand we call the ID series, which I'm excited to continue expanding. Another big focus right now is growing the amount of manufacturing we do within the U.S.

CAN YOU QUANTIFY?

That's hard, but I can tell you that where it makes sense we are actively pursuing it. It has more to do with staying practical in

terms of maintaining the correct price point in the market and serving our customers. We are in the process of moving into a larger facility in Fort Wayne, Ind., and we already have three different areas there for increased manufacturing. Right now, when it comes to manufacturing here, we are constrained by our space, and once we have a larger area to work with, we can more actively pursue it.

HOW DO YOU DEAL WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG?

I always step back and put on my hat as a customer. I believe that customers will understand if something doesn't work right — as long as the company handles the situation right. We always replace the product, of course, and take care of the customer moving forward. We obviously never want situations like that to happen, but they do sometimes.

“I absolutely try everything out. How do you know something unless you do it yourself?”

WHAT'S YOUR OWN MUSICAL BACKGROUND?

I took piano lessons forever, but I'm not that good. [Laughs.] We have a beautiful piano in my house, but my husband and kids play better than I do. Everyone who works here is musical, though, and so many of people on our staff actively play out on weekends. Having that in common helps the vibe of the office.

AS PRESIDENT, DO YOU EVER GET TO DISCONNECT ON VACATION?

Not really. But that comes with the job. I love getting

time to travel with my family, but on these trips I am on call and checking emails every day. Quite frankly, I love what I do and I'm happy to talk and think about it all the time. It's fun and exciting. I want to grow our business. I want to make sure that nobody here is frustrated and that it never feels like a burden for our employees to come to work every day.

IF NOT THE MUSIC INDUSTRY, WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING?

I love designing and thinking about products, and I love the marine industry and aviation, so I could definitely be happy working in one of those fields. Also, it would be fun to work in business consulting, to go in to different companies and help people market their products, streamline their business, and increase their strategic thinking.

Or maybe I'd just go play a bunch of tennis. **MI**

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WALK-THROUGH
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MUSIC CENTER**



A photograph of a music venue. In the background, a stage is lit with warm, orange and red lights. Four performers are on stage: a person in a white shirt and shorts, a person in a yellow shirt and pants, a person in a red shirt and pants, and a person in a white shirt and pants. A large, arched opening in a brick wall is visible on the right side of the stage. The foreground is dark, showing the silhouettes of wooden stools and tables. The overall atmosphere is intimate and artistic.

PLAY ROOM

An established retailer takes a risk by opening an adjacent performance space — and lights up his music community in the process

BY DAVID ZIVAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHIL BUCCI

WALK-THROUGH
CONTEMPORARY
MUSIC CENTER



Anyone who sets foot in the Haymarket, Va., location of Contemporary Music Center can see that something unusual is going on. Combine an exposed, grey industrial ceiling with “spiny green” walls, “lobster tail” red trim, a bit of exposed brick, and an enormous treble clef (in checkerboard tile) on the floor, and you have a retail environment that hardly goes unnoticed in the faux colonial mush of this tony Northern Virginia suburb.

“If you’re not into the arts, you’re gonna know within two

seconds that you’re not our guy,” said Menzie Pittman, owner of the two-location business, a NAMM Top 100 dealer for the past three years. “We’re not afraid. We’re small and sassy. I am not huge, and I do not have pockets full of gold, so we have six seconds to let you know that we are qualified to help your family. When you walk in I have to show that to you on impact.”

Downstairs, lesson studios are framed by bright red trim, and hallways are covered with dozens of framed LP covers. *So you wanna be a rock star?* the albums seem to say. *You’d better practice.* “If

you don’t have an emotional connection to why you are working so hard, then you are not going to stay invested,” Pittman said.

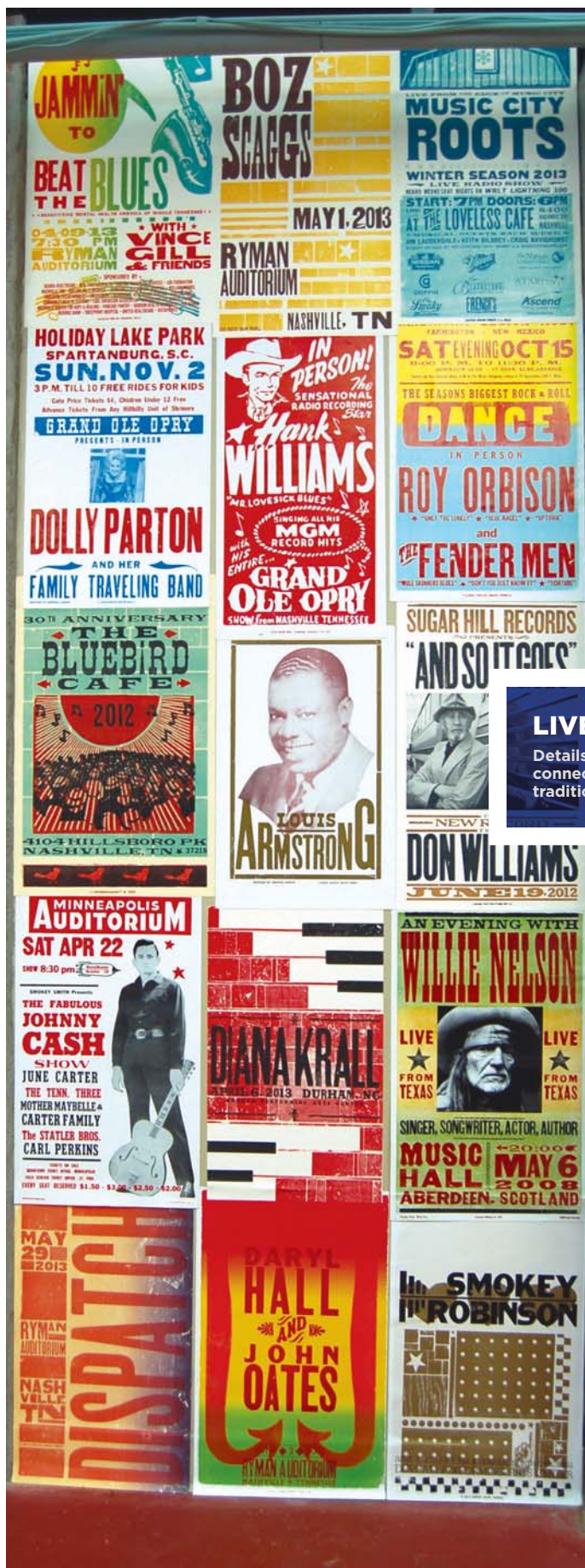
Perhaps best known for its robust rock camp program (detailed in the November 2012 *Music Inc.*), the company has been committed to young music-makers since opening in 1989. So in many respects the opening of 4410, a 1,300-square-foot performance space adjacent to the store, comes as no surprise. The operation has been breeding little rockers for years now.

Some business benefits, such as the major traffic boost and

elimination of recital space rental fees, seem clear. But even early on, 4410 seems bigger than its parts. It has already become a magnet — a place where people want to make music together.

Breaking Through

Few retailers in the nation are looking to expand these days. No one needs the hassles, the contractors or the dust, not to mention the debt service. But when a space next door to the store opened up, the idea of a venue took hold in Pittman’s imagination and would not let go.



LIVE @ 4410

Details in the new space help connect young musicians to a long tradition of live performance.



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The compact retail spaces mixes an abundance of gear with a blast of color.



The bright studios inspire aspiring rockers.

The obstacles were not insignificant but were quickly blown away. Even though it was clear that walls would have to be knocked down, Pittman said, the landlord "didn't blink." Favorable lease terms were negotiated. The local government approved the build, though it asked for some pricey HVAC modifications.

"I went back to the landlord and said adding another \$15,000 for the HVAC is a very heavy burden," Pittman said. He agreed to amortize the cost in a slight rent increase.

And so on. A local contractor had a grandkid who was a multi-year attendee of Rock Camp; Rolodex in hand, he signed on to handle project management. The designer who had done CMC's business cards created a logo and color scheme for the space. Pittman provided some semi-skilled labor, inviting in "the art kids from the local high school" to help execute the complicated interior decoration. Pittman

had been building a mental file from other famous venues around the nation — Blues Alley in Washington, D.C. and The Bluebird Café in Nashville, Tenn., to name two prominent examples — and set about bringing his own space to fruition.

Logo research sparked conversations with his young helpers about music history — The Beatles were the first logo up, and Taylor Swift's signature was second. A giant woman's face (dubbed "Delilah" by the artists) on one wall became a passion project for some young women on the painting team, who spent hours getting her lipstick just right.

Opened in June, 4410 already has a busy open mic night every Friday. Mostly the roster comes from the store's extensive student ranks, though to give the evening "complexion" Pittman has made a habit of inviting local pros and other accomplished players to play a small set. Everyone who performs on the stage is

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offered the privilege of signing the artist wall. "And everyone wants their picture taken when they sign the wall," Pittman said. "And that makes Facebook blow up."

The Big Payback?

So where is the ROI on this passion project? What is the strategy?

To start, Pittman said, there are significant initial savings on recitals and other performances. The big final rock camp gig will still be held in a large rented space, but smaller events now have a cozy home, gratis. Clinics and classes of all sorts, and meet-the-artist events can now take place without interrupting regular store hours.



And step-up sales started almost immediately. "When a kid has a problem with his guitar, we hand him a beautiful Breedlove

or an Epiphone and they plug it in. It feels better. Plays better. Sounds better. And they have a better experience. That's a courtesy. Will it sell guitars? All day long," Pittman said. "I had a kid last week with a cheap capo. We gave him a good capo to try, and he had a great experience. Did the capo sell? Sure it did."

Pittman plans art shows as well as large-scale specialized sales, with set up drum sets, or an abundance of guitars. The first-rate audio system will be used to demo a wide range of audio equipment.

All these possibilities are enabled by the space itself, Pittman said. "Early on, it was clear that we needed to be smart enough to not compromise with the buildout." A 4,600-Watt sound system can handle a wide range of performers. The lighting is bright, plentiful, and professional. Stepping onstage feels real here.

"We had one girl who went up for open mic night and she just wasn't quite ready," Pittman said, adding that this tough lesson also has value. "It changed her perception about how important it is to step up on

a stage. Even though everyone is welcome, you can't just waltz through it."

Indeed, like the main retail space, 4410 is part of an intentionally enveloping experience — a cyclone model, as Pittman put it — that circles from gear to pedagogy to performance and back again.

"The design is there to impact you," he said. "I could have put up [a little] P.A. and let kids use an acoustic guitar, but that's not the experience I was looking for. I could have left the stage floor flat; it would have been cheaper. The lights guy said, 'You know, you probably can get away with this one.' And it would have saved me \$1,000. But I said, 'No, I want the 12 gels, and I want 12 lights not the six or eight or whatever he was recommending. When you get onstage and you've got six from the front and four from the back and two from the sides that's the experience. And that experience is talked about. That experience sells guitars. It sells lessons. It sells conversation. It sells loyalty. And so far I haven't heard anyone say anything besides 'Wow.'" **MI**

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GEAR



TKL | LIMITED EDITION SERIES

Lovely Limiteds

TKL's Limited Edition series has expanded to include cases for 5-string resonator and open back banjos. The cases boast a "Retro Black" Durahyde textured exterior, Providence Forge chrome hardware, combination lock and a vintage blue plush interior. Each model offers a Precision-Fit interior, which anchors the instrument in place, providing the best protection. MSRP: \$249.95. tkl.com



> InsideGEAR



> Bags & Cases

Bam Cases debuts Saint Germain line
PAGE 64

> Guitars, Amps & Accessories

Fender goes modern with new series
PAGE 66

> Audio & Recording

Gemini takes it to the top
PAGE 74

> Drums & Percussion

LP jingles new product
PAGE 76

> Band & Orchestra

Knilling helps players get a grip
PAGE 81

> Print & Gifts

Alfred salutes John Lennon
PAGE 82

> DJ & Lighting

Numark gets mobile
PAGE 86

Market
Focus



SKB | 1R2723-8B-W

Mix on the Go

SKB's new 1R2723-8B-W case features a custom foam interior to accommodate the PreSonus StudioLive 24 Channel and other similar sized mixers, such as the Allen & Heath ZED24. The 1R2723-8B-W is rotationally molded of linear low-density polyethylene plastic for strength and durability. Other features include three oversized carrying handles, in-line skate wheels and an expandable pull handle for easy transport. MAP: \$349.99. skbcases.com

LEVY'S LEATHERS | PRO SERIES

Travel Pro

Levy's Leathers Pro series polyester gig bags are constructed with 1-inch multi-layered triple-density foam padding plus end-pin suspension padding. They also feature a side gusset, a nylon lining with polyester string protector, an adjustable neck stabilizer and leather handles. Pictured is model CCG120 for acoustic guitars, and the bags are also available for electric guitars and electric basses. levysleathers.com





PROTEC | TRI-PAC

Three's Company

Protec recently redesigned their TRI-PAC case for alto saxophone, flute (B or C foot), and a Bb clarinet. The new removable flute and clarinet sections feature molded interiors, soft velvet lining and secure zippered closures. protecstyle.com

GATOR CASES | G-TOUR SIEXP

Rugged Exterior

Gator Cases has unveiled its custom-fitted G-TOUR SIEXP cases for Soundcraft's Si Expression series of digital mixing consoles. The G-TOUR SIEXP series features thick, heavy-duty plywood construction and a tough laminated PVC exterior. gatorcases.com



GUARDIAN | CG-044

Guarded & Ready

Guardian's Vintage hardshell cases feature a rigid archtop design and durable 7-ply cross-grained wood construction for strength. The inside of the case is outfitted with emerald crushed velvet, while dense foam cushions the sides of the instrument. guardiancases.com



GEAR >

BAGS & CASES

Market
Focus

BAM CASES | SAINT GERMAIN

Ultimate Cool

Bam Cases' new line of Saint Germain cases for violin, viola and saxophone are ultra compact, durable and insulated to protect instruments from temperature changes. Bam designed the cases using stronger but lighter materials resulting in a slimmer look and lighter feel. The outer material is ballistic fabric, which has extreme abrasion strength and protection. bamcases.com



ST. LOUIS MUSIC | PRO-CONTOURED CASES

High-Impact

St. Louis Music recently released P. Mauriat's Pro-Contoured saxophone cases. The units feature an outer shell made from high-impact ABS polymers, aluminum valances and turn-key style steel latches. The interior features a medium density foam shell with plush fabric lining. MAP: PMAC-76, \$319; PMTC-76, \$369. stlouismusic.com



PROROCKGEAR | ARMOURGUARD SERIES

Foamtastic Cases

ProRockGear's Armourguard series of foam cases are engineered to fit various stringed instrument body styles. A super-snug plush interior offers a tight fit and the cases feature an outer storage pocket and shoulder straps for ease of carrying. prorockgear.com



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FENDER | MODERN PLAYER SERIES

Modern Marvels

Fender has added six models to the Modern Player series including three guitars and three basses. Joining the collection are the Modern Player Jazzmaster HH, Modern Player Mustang, Modern Player Dimension Bass, Modern Player Jazz Bass, Modern Player Jazz Bass V and Modern Player Stratocaster HSH. fender.com





WALDEN | SOLLANA

Pure Playability

Walden has incorporated its Walden neck joint and neck reinforcement system into its new Sollana models without compromising playability or tone. The Sollana series also features premium tone woods, such as Engelmann Spruce, Sitka Spruce and Western Red Cedar top options. MAP: \$189–\$1,199. waldenguitars.com



TAKAMINE | G SERIES

Acoustic Additions

Takamine has redesigned its G series line. Featuring acoustic and acoustic-electric models, the new G series is available in a variety of body styles that include traditional designs and Takamine-exclusive designs, such as the NEX and FXC body styles. MSRP: Starting at \$259.99. takamine.com

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GEAR >

GUITARS, AMPS & ACCESSORIES

VOX | MINI5 RHYTHM

Mobile Rhythm

Vox Amplification is offering new color choices for its Mini5 Rhythm portable modeling guitar amplifier. The 5W Mini5 Rhythm is ideal for any performer who needs a portable, full-featured amplifier. Musicians can now choose from the original black vinyl covering, as well as an ivory color option or a "classic" option that features a traditional VOX diamond pattern grille cloth. Street: \$159.99. {voxamps.com}



AGUILAR | AG 5P-60

Five-String Master

Aguilar has debuted the AG 5P-60 five-string P-Bass pickup and AG 5P/J-HC hum-canceling pickup set. The AG 5P/J-HC set brings together matched five-string Precision and Jazz-style pickups, including Aguilar's AG 5P-60 P-Bass pickup and an AG 5J-HC bridge pickup. The AG 5P/J-HC is a well-balanced set that provides a flexible array of Precision or Jazz Bass bridge pickup tones. {aguilaramp.com}



PEDULLA | RAPTURE NPG

Experience the Rapture

The Pedulla Rapture bass is now available without a pick guard. The new model, the Rapture NPG, is a full-featured bass, available with choice of single Soapbar, JJ or PJ pickup configurations and low mid boost/cut switch to complement the existing active treble and bass controls. pedulla.com



VIBRAMATE | V5 MODEL MOUNTING KIT

Good Vibrations

The Vibramate V5 Model Mounting Kit is designed for installing a Bigsby B5 "Original" Vibrato on traditional-style guitars that have a Tune-a-Matic type bridge and a Stop-Tailpiece. The kit installs in minutes with the included hardware and eliminates the need for drilling permanent holes in the instrument. vibramate.com



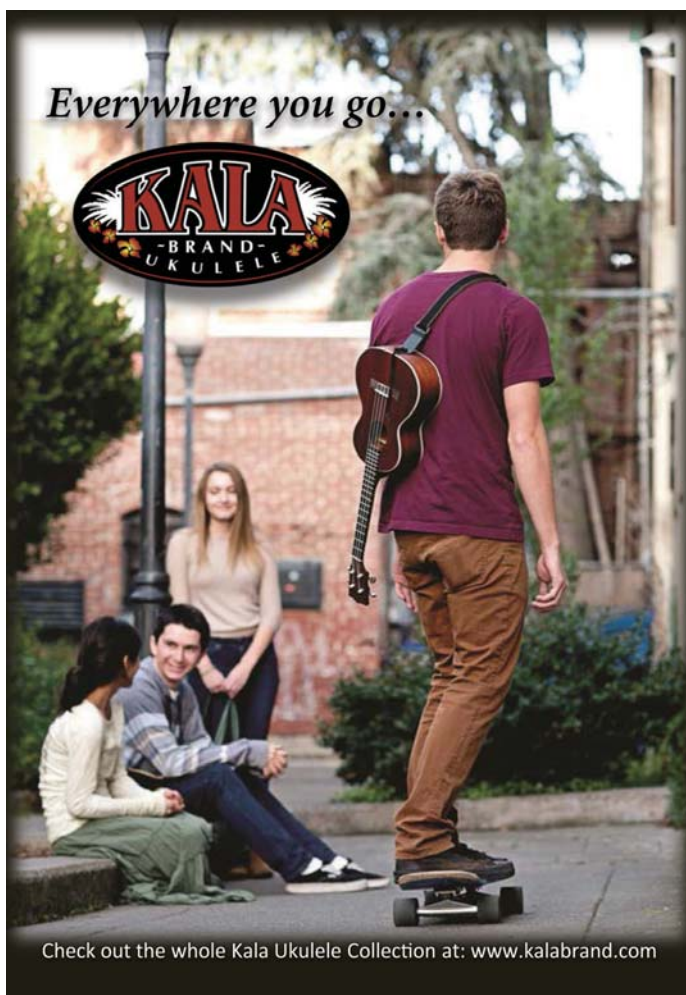
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GEAR >

GUITARS, AMPS & ACCESSORIES



MOD KITS | PERSUADER DELUXE

Persuasive Kit

Mod Kits DIY has introduced the Persuader Deluxe, which uses a Darlington preamp to push cascaded triode vacuum tubes into distortion. Four dual triode vacuum tubes are included with each kit, which can be swapped to create a wide range of tones. The tones range from just a hint of breakup with the JJ 5751 to over-the-top crunchy distortion with the NOS U.S.-made 12AT7. modkitsdiy.com



LEVY'S LEATHER | HAWAIIAN UKULELE STRAPS

Aloha Straps!

Levy's Leathers' new Hawaiian design Ukulele straps are inspired by the designs found on the loud shirts for which the islands are famous. Each 1-inch wide sublimation-printed polyester strap features a plastic sound-hole hook and tri-glide adjustment. Pictured is model MP23. The straps are available in seven original designs. levysleathers.com

AMPEG | V-4B

Revamped & Reissued

Ampeg has reissued its V-4B 100W all-tube bass head. The new bass head embodies the original's tone in a package that is unique to the V-4B. New modern features include an integrated DI with ground lift, a -15dB input for active basses and a range of speaker outputs at different impedances. ampeg.com



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{petersontuners.com}



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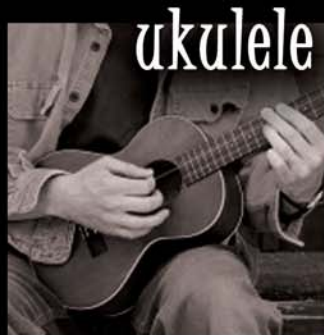


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AKAI | MPC ELEMENT

Elementary Control

Akai Professional's new music production controller, the MPC Element, offers classic MPC features, such as MPC Note Repeat and Swing, and MPC Essentials, a new music production application that can operate standalone with MPC Element or integrate into any DAW as a plugin. MPC Element comes equipped with 16 backlit multicolor pads. MAP: \$149.99. akaiprofessional.com



GEMINI | ES SPEAKERS SERIES

Top of the Line Sound

Gemini's new lightweight class AB amplifier ES speaker series features six different models, including the ES-15BLU. The ES series consists of four active and two passive speakers. geminisound.com



RADIAL | RADIAL PROMS2

Single Splitter

Radial Engineering has introduced the Radial ProMS2, a single-channel mic splitter designed for P.A., recording and broadcast applications. The Radial ProMS2 is completely passive and discrete to ensure optimal signal flow. The engine inside is an Eclipse ET-MS10 transformer that is linear from 20Hz to 20kHz, while exhibiting less than 0.01 percent distortion at 20Hz. radialeng.com





MACKIE | MRMK3

Acoustically Optimized

Mackie has redesigned its MRmk3 Powered Studio Monitors line. The MRmk3 monitors are acoustically optimized to enhance the mixing, monitoring and multimedia experience in any home or project studio. The line includes 6.5-inch MR6mk3 full-range monitor and the MR10Smk3 studio subwoofer. mackie.com



M-AUDIO | AXIOM AIR

Get Major Air

With three flagship models, the Axiom AIR series lets users take command of everything from digital recording and virtual instrument software to MIDI hardware via USB or MIDI. Automatic controller mapping matches the illuminated rotary encoders, pads, buttons and faders to key parameters in popular music production applications. m-audio.com



PRESONUS | COACTUAL STUDIO
REFERENCE MONITORS

Studio Swag

PreSonus' new Sceptre-series CoActual studio reference monitors feature an advanced coaxial design that works integrally with a 32-bit, 48 kHz processor using Fulcrum Acoustic's TQ Temporal Equalization technology. The series includes two models, which both feature acoustic ports. presonus.com

ALESIS | DM7X KIT

Electric Feel

Alesis has debuted its DM7X Kit electronic drum set. The set features five advanced design 8-inch dual-zone drum pads — four toms plus the snare, along with four 10-inch cymbal pads with choke: hi-hat, ride and two crash cymbals. The DM7X Kit also includes the StealthKick 2 compact kick trigger pad, paired with the chain-driven X Kick Bass pedal. MAP: \$699. {alesis.com}

LATIN PERCUSSION | CLICK HI-HAT
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the Way

Latin Percussion's new Click Hi-Hat Tambourine lets players mute the jingles quickly by a simple click of the patent-pending oversized button on the top of the tambourine. Featuring a durable plastic frame crafted from Jenigor, the Click Hi-Hat Tambourine easily mounts to the pull rod of a hi-hat stand. When muted and struck, the tambourine creates a quick, trashy sound effect. MSRP: \$59. {lpmusic.com}





DIXON | POWER PICCOLO

Power Play

Dixon has upgraded its 9-ply, 6- by 13-inch Rosewood Power Piccolo. The snare is now equipped with rock maple hoops, finished to match its natural Rosewood shell. The plied wood hoops balance the character of Rosewood for a richer back beat. playdixon.com



GARRAHAND | HAND PERCUSSION

True Original

The new Garrahand offers an original sound, similar to a steelpan. It features an easy tuning system and an electroacoustic patent-pending microphone technology that captures only the sound of the tongues and isolates it from other instruments. Additionally the instrument can be held by any standard cymbal holder to use in a drum set. garrahand.com

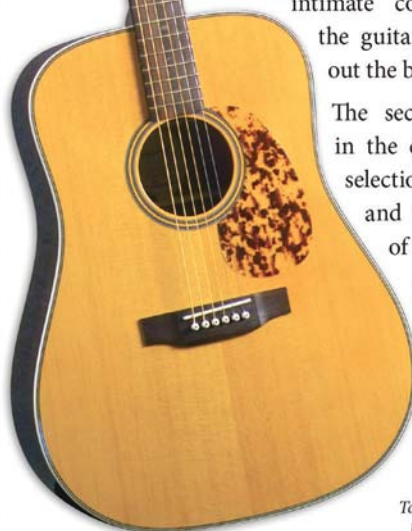


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GRETSCH | CLUB STREET

Hit da Club

Gretsch Drums has added to the Catalina Club series with the new Club Street kit. This kit is a flexible solution for the performing drummer that fits into the tightest of spaces with new compact sizes including a 12- by 16-inch bass drum, 6- by 10-inch mounted tom, 11- by 13-inch floor tom and a 5- by 13-inch snare drum. gretschdrums.com



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Ben Findlay, Front of House - Peter Gabriel

"With the Audix SCX25A's, I can tell exactly which cymbal is which. They sound creamy, organic and natural; just the way they do sitting at ground-zero at the drum kit as I play them. SCX25A's are the most amazing overhead mics I've ever used."

Todd Sucherman, Drummer - Styx

"Whenever I go to a new studio, I always ask the in-house guy to put up his best pair of piano mics. Then I put up the Audix SCX25A's. They always out-perform. They're my go-to piano miking solution."

Paul Mitchell, Front of House - Joe Sample, Jazz Crusaders

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Tom Carr - Recording Engineer/Sound Designer - Forbes Center for the Performing Arts



"I have owned a pair of the SCX25A lollipops since they were introduced. It is one of my favorite microphones for acoustic guitar and jazz guitar. Its ability to capture the essential sonic detail of guitar, piano and any other stringed instrument makes the SCX25A perfect for high-resolution 24-bit/DSD recording."

John Gatski - Everything Audio Network



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GEAR >

BAND & ORCHESTRA



ZONDA | SIGNATURE INSTRUMENTS

Signature Style

St. Louis Music has debuted the new line of Zonda signature band instruments. The full line of instruments includes flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, trumpet and trombone. stlouismusic.com



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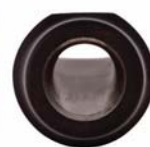
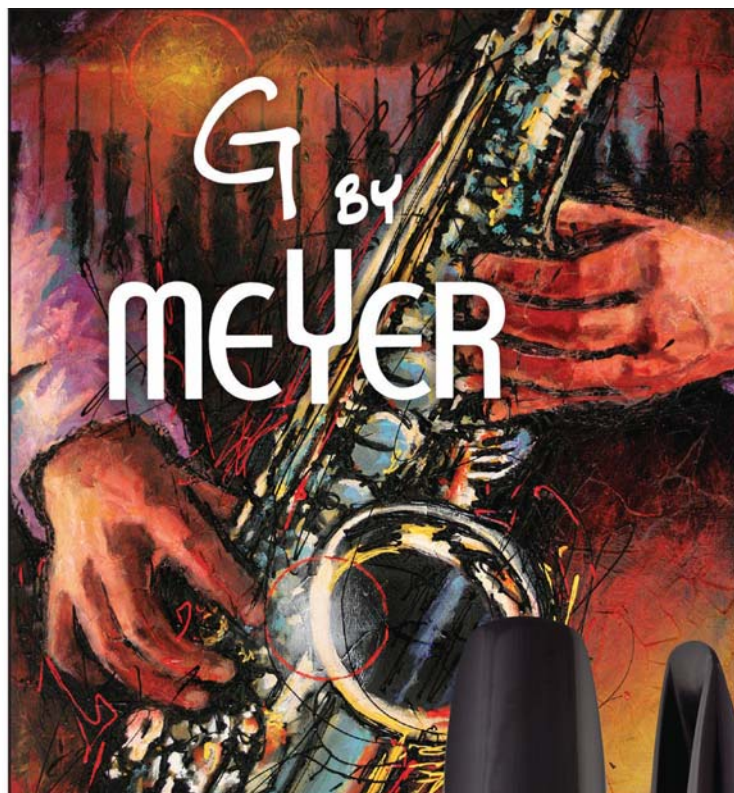
Knilling has rolled out the BowMate, a comfortable yet firm bow grip designed to ensure a proper, relaxed bow hold, as well as assist in keeping the bow perpendicular to the strings. The unit is lightweight and precision molded from a thermo-elastomer polymer. MSRP: \$11.95. {knilling.com}



VANDOREN | AL5

Optimum Sound

Vandoren has added to its Optimum line of alto saxophone mouthpieces with the new AL5. Like the AL3 mouthpiece, the AL5 offers even intonation and ease of response. It features a slightly more open tip, while subtle interior changes provide a different color to a saxophonist's palette. {dansr.com}



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lick LIBRARY LEARN TO PLAY... 80s METAL

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POISON Every Rose Has Its Thorn
ACCEPT Fast As A Shark
SKID ROW 18 And Life
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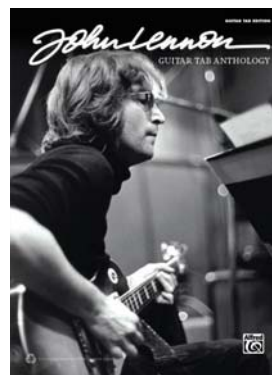
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DVD VIDEO

ALFRED | 'JOHN LENNON: GUITAR TAB ANTHOLOGY'

Imagine All the Tabs

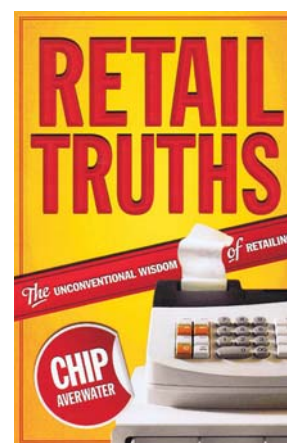
Alfred Music has debuted *John Lennon: Guitar TAB Anthology*. This 25-song collection from Lennon's solo career features many songs, transcribed and arranged for guitar tab. Transcriptions include "Imagine" and "Instant Karma." alfred.com



HAL LEONARD | RETAILING BOOKS

Retailing Tips

Hal Leonard has begun distributing business books ideal for music dealers and their employees. The titles include *Retail Truths: The Unconventional Wisdom of Retailing* and *50 Ideas to Train Your Sales Staff in 15 Minutes a Day*. halleonard.com



East Side, West Side, all around the town...

GAMA On The Sidewalks Of New York



On June 21st the **Guitar and Accessories Marketing Association (GAMA)** took to the streets of New York as part of Make Music New York (MMNY) boasting they could teach anyone to play guitar in 5 minutes. GAMA Executive Director, Rob Sulkow; Co-Chair of GAMA's Guitar Education Team, Glen McCarthy; and New GAMA member, Sean Persinger from Quixotic Music gave guitar instruction to more than 40 people over the course of the day. A big time was had by all. See more photos at: www.discoverguitar.com

Make Music is a national movement and MMNY joins several other US cities that celebrate music making at the National Music Day, June 21st. MMNY is in its 7th year, and has musicians playing at various locations around the city over the course of the day. GAMA was there to inspire the next generation of music makers.





AIM GIFTS | ORNAMENTS

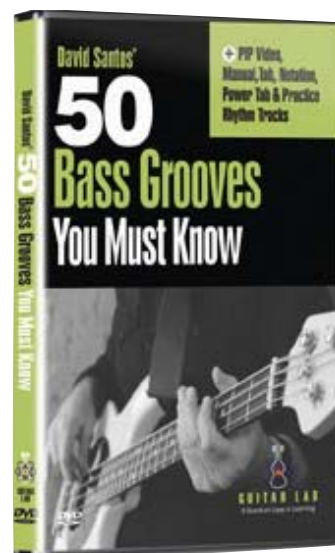
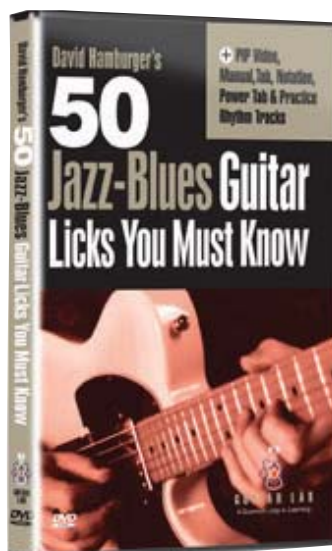
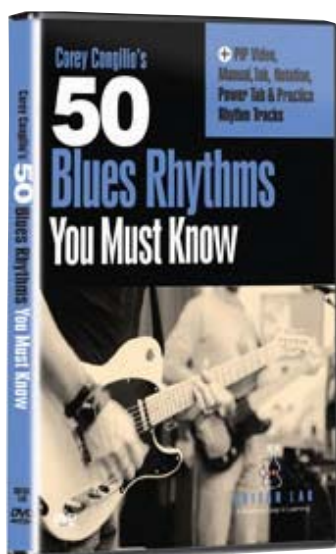
Deck the Halls

AIM Gifts now offers music-themed holiday ornaments. Pictured is the latest boxed three-pack set, along with several bestsellers. With the new additions, AIM now offers more than 70 different music-related ornaments. aimgifts.com

EMEDIA | 'GUITAR LAB'

Lab Rat

Three new titles have been added to eMedia's *Music Guitar Lab* line of guitar instruction DVDs. The titles are: *50 Blues Rhythms You Must Know*, *50 Jazz-Blues Licks You Must Know* and *50 Bass Grooves You Must Know*. The Guitar Lab DVD series includes 21 titles on DVD for beginner to advanced guitar and bass instruction. All DVDs feature picture in picture video, a manual, standard notation, tab, power tab files, practice rhythm tracks and additional bonus material. emediamusic.com



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NUMARK | MIXTRACK EDGE

On the Edge

Numark's new Mixtrack Edge controller is ideal for mobile DJ setups, minimalist setups, pre-gig prep and parties. At just 14mm thin, the Mixtrack Edge is portable, and its low-profile design features an integrated cover to protect the control surface. MAP: \$149.99. {numark.com}



PIONEER | DJ SPEAKERS

Speak Up!

Pioneer has introduced its line of active DJ speakers. The speakers are offered in four models: S-DJ80X, S-DJ60X, S-DJ50X and S-DJ50X-W (white). All models feature quality sound, improved bass response and reliability, three types of inputs, and built-in equalization. {pioneer-usa.com}



AMERICAN DJ | TRI38

Footloose & Fancy Free

The new Mega TRI38 Sys from American DJ is an all-in-one portable RGB LED wash system. It features a wireless battery-powered foot controller that gives users command over such functions as black out, sound activation, programs and color from distances up to 60 feet. {adj.com}



DURATRUSS | PRO ZIP COVERS

Cover Up

The new DuraTruss Pro Zip Covers let users enjoy the soft, elegant look of covered truss while still being able to clamp lights, video screens and crossbars onto their trussing. The units combine professional white lycra truss covers with midsection zippers. Once unzipped, the openings let lights be clamped directly onto trussing without scuffing or tearing the cover. duratruss.com



AMERICAN AUDIO | ELMC-1 MIDI CONTROLLER

The Mini Midi

American Audio has released its lightweight two-channel ELMC-1 MIDI controller, which can be hooked up via USB to use a computer as an audio source. The ELMC-1 includes such features as pitch bend, 3-band EQ, and one master and two separate gain controls for volume. americanaudio.us



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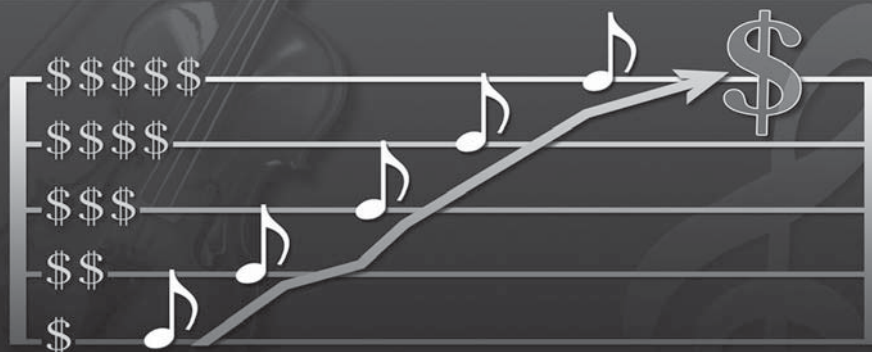
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AIM Gifts.....	15	Paul Reed Smith Guitars	35
Alfred Publishing.....	27	Pedulla.....	70
Allparts.....	68	Peterson Tuners.....	38
AP International	69	PianoDisc.....	59
Armadillo.....	51	Protec.....	57
Audio-Technica	47	Radial Engineering.....	10
Audix.....	79	Re-Axe.....	15
Cannonball.....	65	Retail Up Music	58
Casio.....	17	Roland	2
Cavanaugh.....	13, 91	Sabian.....	37
CE Distribution.....	57	Saga	77
D'Addario.....	5	Samson.....	92
Entertainment Lighting	87	Shubb Capos.....	18
Gama	83	SKB Cases.....	60
GruvGear	18	St. Louis Music.....	78
Hal Leonard	21	String Swing	73
Hohner	45	The Music Link.....	7, 9
Hunter Musical Products	80	Theo Wanne.....	56
JJ Babbitt	81	UEC Evercast.....	25
Jody Jazz.....	68	Veritas.....	4
Kala Brand Music.....	70	Walking Bird Publications ...	19
Kyser.....	71	WD Music Products.....	25
Levy's Leathers.....	32	Zildjian	3
LM Products	4	Zildjian Gen 16	31
Loud Technology	29	Zoom North America.....	11
Music & Arts	85		

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Paul Decker

Music Villa
Bozeman, Mont.

Some years it's been tough, but I have always tried to give some sort of bonus — cash. Basically, I look at cash flow and see how well the year is going and try to chunk off as much as I can for the guys. I look at seniority and who is really pulling the weight, so it can be different for everybody. And they get what I decide. It's merit-based.

I used to do all kinds of goofy stuff, but now I do it properly, by the book. I write checks and do all the typical tax stuff, which is not as exciting as an envelope of cash.

Everyone works on Christmas Eve. We close early and have a bottle of whiskey so everyone has a little Christmas cheer. We do a gift exchange in the store, and I hand everyone an envelope. It makes it kind of fun — it's become a tradition.

>>>

Gordy Wilcher

Owensboro Music Center
Owensboro, Ky.

This is our 40th year in business, and we have traditionally always done a holiday bonus. It's usually cash. We figure a certain dollar figure based on monthly or quarterly pay, and it can vary based on how the season has been.

The figure depends on experience and how many years they have been here and what their duties are. We also try to include our instructors. We aren't able to give them quite as generous a bonus as we do our people in sales and service, but we always try to help them out a little bit as well. In our case, the teachers are self-employed, but still we try to bonus them.

In the past we've just done the bonus because we're generous, great guys — but this year we're thinking about changing course. At retail boot camp, I heard some interesting ways of doing this. You look at what you did last year in the quarter, and you set goals, and then bonus depending on what percentage over that you are. We're going to try that this year for a little more motivation.

>>>

Russ Beacock
Beacock Music
Vancouver, Wash.



How do you **spiff** your **staff** at the holidays?

Over the years, we've done it all. I've done the envelope on the 24th, and frankly I haven't seen the return on that. *It's Christmas Eve, I'm heading out, Let me go get my envelope* because that's what we do and it's kind of expected. I don't want to get to that point. I want to keep people excited and motivated and building their book of business.

My only problem with spiffs is that generally they are designed to move stale merchandise. At least that's how we've done it: We need to move something so there's a \$20 bill or a \$50 bill hanging on it. And without sounding too corny that's not in the customer's best interest.

So while I would say

that we don't have spiffs, we do follow our numbers very closely. Everybody knows what they are doing and what their co-workers are doing and what our goals are. So we do have, for lack of a better word, prizes. Incentives. It's fun stuff that we do either individually or as a department. Band and orchestra: We might say, "Here was their weekly goal ... we get a report from them, here's what they did, here's how they did it." And when those goals are achieved sometimes we give spot cash. That's always fun. Sometimes it's bowling, sometimes it's dinner, sometimes it's an extra day off. We do this all year, but it's really focused for us in the fourth quarter.

Everything is amplified.

We always throw a nice party, a sit-down dinner with spouses and significant others. And you could say people have come to expect that, too — but I think everyone looks forward, if nothing else, to a good meal. Not over-thinking it or overproducing it has been the key — and also not going cheap. You just can't, on that one. So, again, not so much the red envelopes, but we spend thousands on that dinner.

Naturally they can't get away without a few words from me, though I try to keep that in check, expressing gratitude more than anything. No numbers: Let's have a nice meal, a little entertainment and laugh a little.

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