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NOVEMBER 2013
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SECRETS *of the* SPECIALISTS

At Chicago Music Exchange, David Kalt helps the stars feel right at home

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Dave Kalt

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The Art of Selling High-End Add-Ons **P. 54**

GOOD PRACTICE
Make Your Marketing Dollars Count **P. 38**

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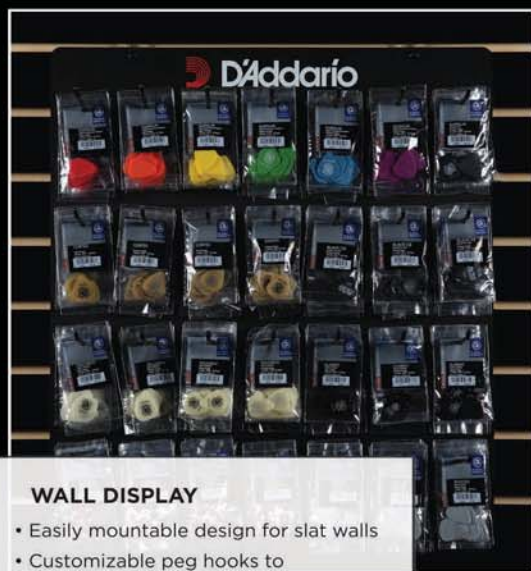


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SECRETS OF THE SPECIALISTS

David Kalt's Chicago Music Exchange is a stunning mecca for pros and aficionados alike.

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BY MYRNA SISLEN



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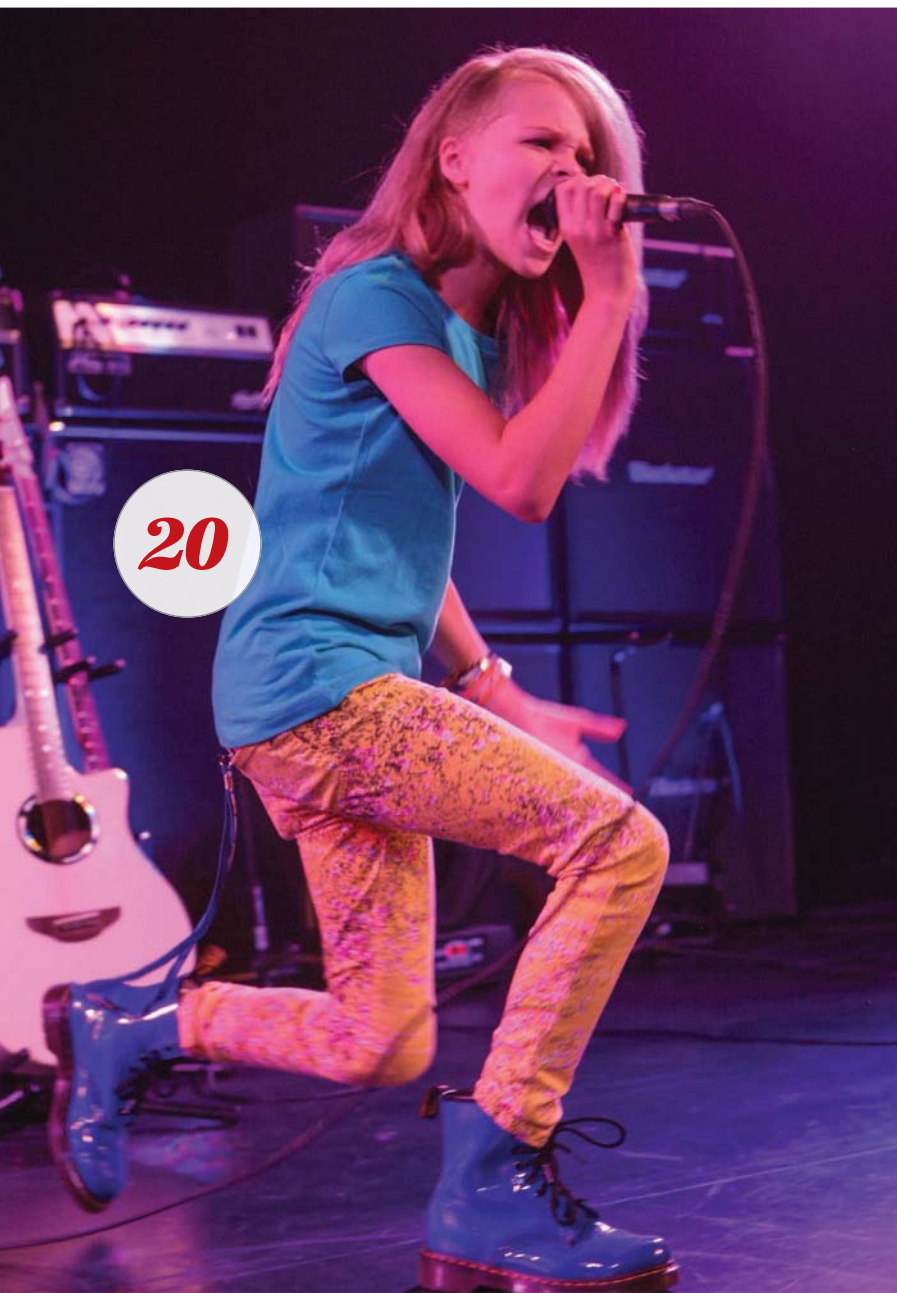
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PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY DAVID ZIVAN

PLAYING ALONG

Won't you stay, just a little bit longer?

— M. WILLIAMS

So my nephew, 13, has left the trumpet behind. I wasn't surprised to get the news. He was a pretty diligent practicer, and I think he liked it pretty well, and the noises coming from the basement had begun to resemble music — but he's a sports nut, both as fan and participant. That's what did it. There's baseball, and basketball, and most of all, there is soccer — a traveling team whose demands control the schedule of the entire family.

I expressed encouragement every time I visited, and indeed I was thrilled to see his progress. But there wasn't really much I could do; those sorts of decisions are made in the wake of the day-to-day. In truth, I'm just glad his brass career wasn't derailed by video games.

Still, it reminded me of something I had seen back when the school year was starting: a publication from the Music Achievement Council and NAMM entitled "Bridging the Gap Between Middle School and High School." My nephew's continuing was never very likely, even with Uncle David's cash bribes. But what about kids who are on the bubble? "For one reason or another, not all of our students continue their participation throughout their high school years," reads one of the introductory pages. "In fact, it's the transition

from middle school to high school that has been identified as being the most crucial period in retaining our students."

That transition also marks the spot where those kids become self-directed consumers. As an industry, therefore, we should be doing everything we can think of to help students continue. This booklet is a terrific resource, with chapters designed for "directors, parents, students, music supervisors, and principals," as the cover notes. The tips inside are a mix of common-sense relationship building (middle school band directors should attend upper school concerts with their students, and vice-versa) and hard-edged administrative insight (track enrollment and participation data).

The retailer's role in all this is so multifaceted that one booklet couldn't hope to describe it. But at this moment, as school music programs all over the nation are gearing up for their holiday concerts, it's worth taking a moment to revisit your interactions with the groups listed above. Have you bought your local band a pizza lately? Have your reps followed-up enough on their rentals? Did you send that thank-you note to the director who keeps sending you business? Tending those connections means business down the road.

Incidentally, music is not gone from my nephew's house. He and his younger brother are both now taking guitar classes at school, and already they have surpassed their self-taught uncle. Fine with me. **MI**



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LETTERS

A Third-Generation Thank You

A big thank you to Associate Editor Katie Kailus and the folks at *Music Inc.* for featuring us in the October cover story “Holiday Promos That Work Now.”

As a small local store which began 49 years ago, we could never have dreamed the business would grow to where it is now — in our 3rd generation of family ownership and on the cover of a magazine we’ve read for years.

I try to create marketing campaigns which are relevant to today’s marketplace, and my staff strives each day to ensure a spectacular customer service experience for all who pass through our doors.

Whether it’s a first-time lesson student, a member of The Cleveland Orchestra trying mouthpieces in our repair shop, or folks we meet for the first time at a professional flute show, we are thankful to them all for their patronage and truly enjoy helping them further their musical endeavors.

Being recognized by your magazine gives us momentum for a profitable 4th quarter as we head into our 50th anniversary celebration.

Lauren Haas Amanfoh
President and COO
Royalton Music Center
North Royalton, Ohio

Continuing the Family Tradition

When my husband and I opened up our music store Royalton Music Center in 1964, we could never have conceived of becoming a NAMM Top 100 dealer. However my granddaughter and third generation owner, Lauren Haas Amanfoh, has done



just that three years in a row.

I thank you for recognizing Lauren’s ability to develop new and imaginative ways to market musical instruments and increase profit. And know too, that you have made her grandmother very proud.

Ida Eleck
Founding owner
Royalton Music Center
North Royalton, Ohio

Keep on Rockin’

Contemporary Music Center would like to thank *Music Inc.* and Editor David Zivan for the walk-through feature “Play Room” in the October issue.

The feature article captured the essence of the venue CMC has built, and not only did it capture the look and feel of the room, but also the reason, pur-

pose and need for why we took the risk to build the room in the first place.

I think it’s fair to say that the independent landscape has changed and continues to do so. It’s also fair to say that most independent retail operations are generally owned by a specialist whether that’s a musician or a repairman or a luthier, etc. It’s up to us to find that special offering that we can bring the customer. Some do it through setups and some use the same tired chop as everyone else: pricing. Some combine service, pricing and specialized knowledge. When you find that unique offering that you can bring the customer, that’s when your business will begin to stand out.

I am very grateful that *Music*

Inc. also thinks that way. They are the “Ted Talk” of the music trade publishing business. They are always taking a risk by writing about progressive music retailers with untried new ideas in the field. Without the support of *Music Inc.*, our story would reach far fewer and would have less impact in the music business.

A tip of the hat to your entire team for taking the risk and recognizing a retailer whose mission is to help develop young players by providing the Play Room and hopefully to rekindle a muted passion in adult musicians by helping them to remember that you really are never too old to rock ‘n’ roll.

Menzie Pittman
Owner
Contemporary Music Center
Haymarket, Va.

The Beat Goes on for 50 More Years

Many thanks from Clawson’s Music in Corpus Christi, Texas, to *Music Inc.* on the October article profiling our 50 years in business.

God has blessed us with the ability to share our talents with our customers by working hard to bring the best services we can. And our employees are just as dedicated as we are.

And the beat goes on.

**Bob, Barbara, Bubba,
Bobby and Bo Clawson**
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Universal Percussion welcomes retailers and the public
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- > **Rising Star**
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Free lessons from the PMC rock the Vans Warped tour
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RETAIL



R.I.T. MUSIC | BY DAVID ZIVAN, WITH PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDY WILLIAMS

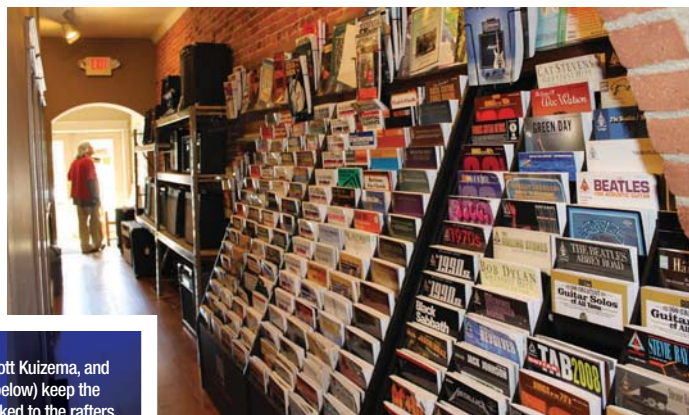
CHAIRMEN OF THE BOARD

The change, said Randy Perkins, owner of R.I.T. Music in Holland, Mich., came “about 6 years ago. My teenager wanted to get into skateboarding and I thought, ‘Hmm, maybe this will keep

her out of trouble.” So along with the guitars, drums and P.A. equipment in his densely stocked store, he started carrying skateboards and related accessories. Somehow, the model worked. Today, the 3,500-square-foot operation is a

successful, quirky hybrid shop, a destination for musicians and skaters alike. “We had a couple of people who didn’t like it at first,” Perkins said. “But it seems to integrate pretty well.” Perkins and store manager Scott Kuizema say the two cus-

tomers groups have a surprising amount of overlap. “Close to 50 percent of the people who look at the skate shop also look at the drums and guitars, and vice-versa,” Kuizema said. “They seem to have an interest in both, whether they are buying or not.”



Jason Perkins, Scott Kuizema, and Randy Perkins (below) keep the vintage space stocked to the rafters with new and used instruments, boutique and high-end pedals, and a tight selection of print.



The store's business flow is surprisingly steady, considering it is located in a town perhaps best known as a beach destination. Mid-September can be slow, Perkins said (the store carries no band or orchestral instruments), but January, with its flood of post-holiday cash, is traditionally strong. The walls are dense with sharp-looking new and used guitars, close to 200 instruments set against the 100-year-old building's original brick walls. "Used is where we make our biggest margins," Perkins said. "I've probably got



150 used guitars in the basement that just need to be serviced.”

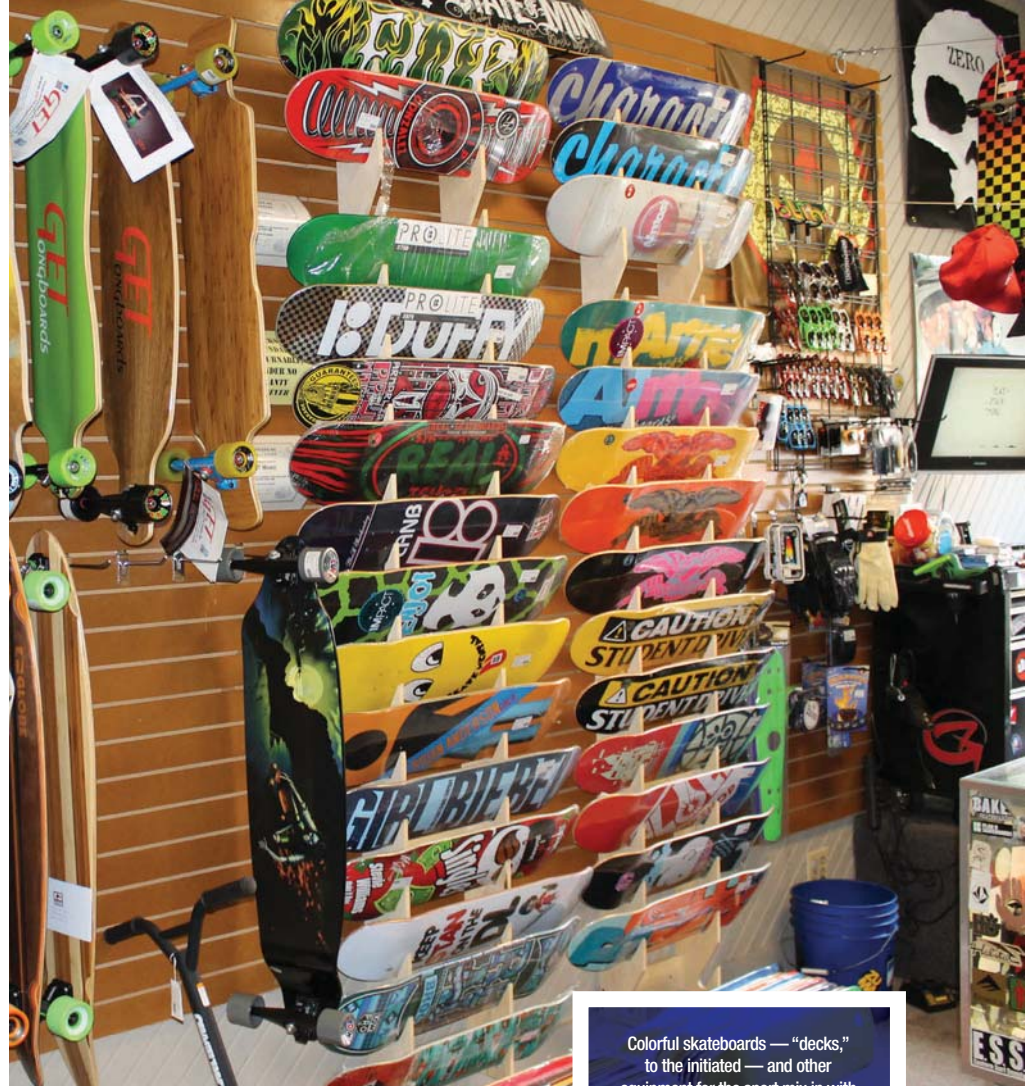
The store carries an unusually strong selection of pedals, to back up its guitar focus and give them a kind of competitive edge. “It’s easier for us to stock boutique and higher-end pedals that might not be at other stores,” Kuizema noted, instead of a large selection of high-end instruments, which have not moved well in their market. Perkins offers a small pedal line he designed himself.

The business is located in two storefronts on the scenic main street of Holland, very close to Hope College, a medium-sized liberal arts school (another R.I.T. is located in Grand Rapids, Mich., but is only loosely affiliated). Perkins said the R.I.T. staff knows some of the professors, who send students to the store for sheet music, percussion and classical guitar purchases. There is some ebb and flow with tourists and weekenders stopping through.

The full-time team is just three staffers — Perkins, Kuizema and Jason Perkins, the owner’s nephew. Each is “able to do just about anything” the store needs, Perkins said, including the free guitar setups they offer with all purchases. On top of that, all three have some direct skateboarding experience — Perkins with his daughter, and his nephew and Kuizema as actual enthusiasts. “We’re kind of just doing what we do,” Kuizema notes.

And for now it seems to have made a successful landing.

“When we first opened the skate shop, it was amazing how many parents would bring their kids in for lessons or whatever, and they would see the skate shop and say, ‘Oh, no,’” Kuizema said. “We’re hitting them from both sides now.” **MI**



Colorful skateboards — “decks,” to the initiated — and other equipment for the sport mix in with all manner of drums and music accessories. All three staffers have experience in both activities.



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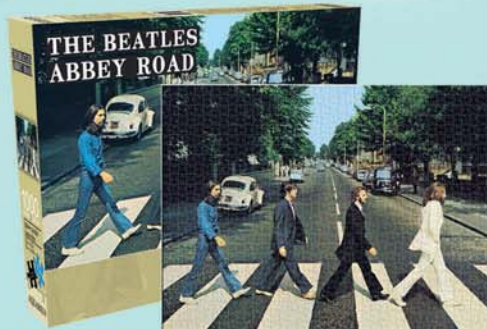
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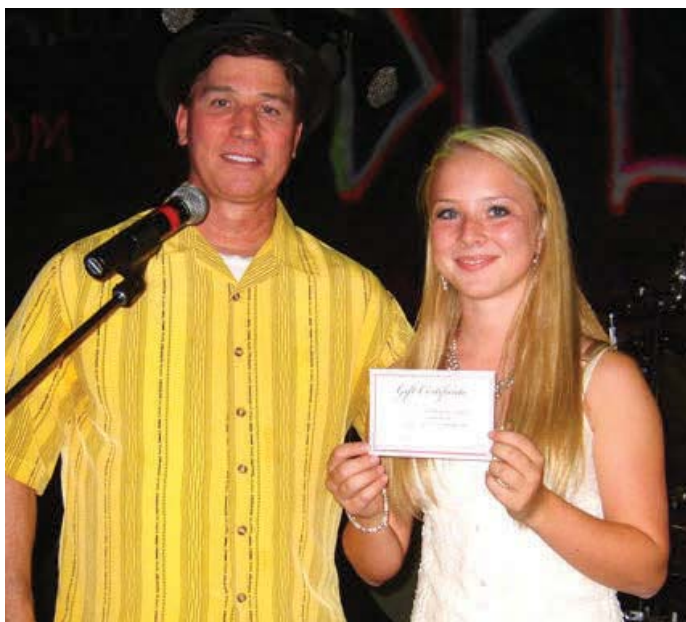
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Universal Percussion Hosts Open House, Drumfest

In September, Universal Percussion hosted a large-scale open house, inviting dealers and consumers to visit its warehouse and headquarters in Columbiana, Ohio, as well as its annual Drumfest. The events, which featured discounted pricing and live entertainment, marked the first time that Universal had opened its warehouse to the public.

During the day, consumers were invited to browse the aisles in order to see, feel and test the more than 12,000 items on display. They were free to hand-pick their choices of drums, cymbals, gongs, world percussion, sticks,

mallets, pedals and hardware, and then take them to one of the retailers on hand to facilitate on-the-spot sales.

The afternoon and evening featured a remote broadcast by a local rock radio station and number of live performances. Former *Modern Drummer* editor (and current drummer for Jay & The Americans) Rick Van Horn served as emcee. Sets by local marching bands were supplemented by singer/guitarist Natalie Sprouse, Universal Percussion President Tom Shelley, and finally by legendary drummer Terry Bozzio.

Clockwise from top left: Tom Shelley, Universal Percussion president, presents a \$1,000 merchandise certificate for the South Range High School Raider Marching Band to his daughter, Jessica, who plays piccolo in the band; Terry Bozzio hits it; Ron Florkowski, Andrew Menich and Brint Florkowski of Central Instrument Company in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio; two members of the Fitch High School drumline



SCHOOL OF ROCK STILL ROCKING

Students from the School of Rock location in Plainfield, Ill., performed their debut show at Tailgaters in Bolingbrook, Ill., in September. Gary Loizzo from "The American Breed" performed his platinum selling hit, "Bend Me Shape Me," with students from the school as his backing band. Students also jammed out to songs by The Beatles, The Who, The Rolling Stones, The Yardbirds and The Animals.



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Sara Faust and Tony DeSare



Pianist Tony DeSare Plays Faust Harrison

In October, pianist and singer Tony DeSare, a Yamaha artist, gave a performance at the Faust Harrison Pianos location in White Plains, N.Y.

Named a "Rising Star" Male Vocalist in *DownBeat* magazine's 2009 Critics Poll, DeSare has won critical and popular acclaim for his concert performances throughout the United States, as well as in Australia, Japan and Hong Kong.

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Note From Joe

“A man always has two reasons for what he does
—a good one, and the real one.”

—J.P. Morgan

It's hard to believe with the holidays still ahead of us that the NAMM Show is just around the corner. I saw the quote above and it really made me think about the many reasons that Winter NAMM has become the most important event on our industry's annual calendar.

There are so many “good” reasons to attend. We're all eager to see the latest innovations from our manufacturers—the new instruments, technological breakthroughs and cutting-edge designs, features and enhancements. We're “gear people” and, like you, I love to see what our Commercial Members have been working on all year. Our Retail Members come looking for that competitive edge in bringing all those great new products back to their customers and communities.

The educational offerings at the NAMM Show have also become a primary driver of attendance. In fact, many dealers tell me that NAMM U is the number one reason they come. I personally have a blast doing the opening “Breakfast of Champions” session and hope to see many of you there as we kick off the show.

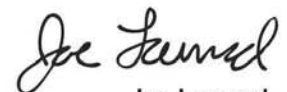
Nearly everyone who attends NAMM tells me that the show gives them a pulse on where the industry is going, a factor that's critical to their decision-making in the year ahead. Not to mention, all the peer-to-peer meetings, networking

and even casual conversations in the aisles and lobbies that serve to help drive Member success in the year ahead.

These are all good reasons, but are there more? Are there other “real” reasons people attend the show? I believe we go because we love what we do, we love this industry, and we know all of our friends will be there. This gathering of the musical tribes only happens once a year and, for many of us, it is the best trip (for some the only trip!) all year. We go because we're proud that our industry brings music to the world and we know that a successful show will help support music and music education around the world.

Our industry is full of fun, passionate and creative people who all chose to do what they loved most, knowing that doing that was more important than anything else. And when the global music products industry gathers each year in Anaheim, these truths are affirmed and we're once again reminded that we are the luckiest people in the world.

So no matter what motivates you to make the trip to the NAMM Show—the good reasons and the real ones—we'll look forward to seeing you soon.



Joe Lamond
NAMM PRESIDENT AND CEO



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the NAMM[®] show¹⁴

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SUPPLY

GRIFFIN TECHNOLOGY | BY KATIE KAILUS

CONNECT MORE

Let's face it: the iRevolution is not going anywhere. iPhone, iPod and iPad accessories are still gaining momentum in the musical products industry, and are no doubt changing the way players create their music.

One company helping musicians hone their craft through their tablets and phones is Griffin Technology, a Nashville, Tenn.-based accessories provider for personal computing and digital media. Griffin expanded its offerings to serve the musical products industry in 2010, but formally debuted its instrument jack connectors StudioConnect, GuitarConnect Pro and MicConnect at this past Summer NAMM.

"This is somewhat a new category for us, even though it's very



Andrew Biddle

inger Anderson, public relations director for Griffin. "So we are looking to grow here in the MI industry. I think this [category] is still very new and not a lot of people are aware you can do this without a full-on rig."

The StudioConnect with Lightning is an audio interface that works with the iPad and provides plug-and-play convenience for guitars, audio and MIDI-in/out along with a lightning charging dock. GuitarCon-

nect Pro and MicConnect are components of StudioConnect. GuitarConnect Pro converts a guitar's analog signal into a 100-percent digital connection, so musicians can play, record and multitrack in 24 bit-48kHz quality sound.

"Griffin engineered the StudioConnect to maximize the user experience when creating music with the iPad," said Andrew Biddle, Griffin Technology audio category manager. "From the ergonomic angle at which the iPad lays, to the case compatibility which lets you easily dock and undock your device, we know

how musicians use their iPads."

And Griffin knows this because the staff is made up mostly of musicians — no surprise considering its Nashville roots.

"Half the people here are musicians themselves," said Ballinger Anderson. "They like playing around with our products trying to fix, fine-tune and get ideas."

GAINING EXPOSURE

In an effort to reach more indie retailers, Griffin recently entered into a distribution agreement with Hal Leonard.

"Before working with Hal Leonard our music line was predominantly available through our consumer electronic distributors," Ballinger Anderson said. "And while [that] was a good start, we're really looking forward to growing our presence in the music retail space."

Also on the horizon for Griffin is the debut of its DJConnect, which lets DJs pre-cue their music and beat-mix digital turntables on their iPad.

"The iPad has opened the door for great sounding music creation to musicians of all ages and skill levels," Biddle said. "Our products provide the missing link that allows musicians to connect their instruments to an iPad and explore their musical creativity." **MI**



much in our wheelhouse, since we have been making accessories for Mac and iOS for as long as they've existed," said Jackie Ball-

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THE CAVANAUGH COMPANY | BY FRANK ALKYER

NEXT-GENERATION ACCESSORIES

The Cavanaugh Company may not be as well known as the accessory lines it produces, but that's just fine with this third-generation family business. The Cavanaughs prefer to keep the focus on their brands — Super-Sensitive, Black Diamond Strings and Bari Woodwind Supplies.

As company President Jim Cavanaugh offers a tour of Cavanaugh's Sarasota, Fla., facility, he proudly points out machines that are still in action that his grandfather and father designed, as well as modern models that he had a hand in.

"This was designed by my grandfather," he said, pointing to an elaborate winding machine for orchestral strings. "We still use it today. He was a mechanical engineer. As a result, these older machines tend to be pulley driven. He was not into electronics."

SUPER-SENSITIVITY TRAINING

The Cavanaugh family's involvement in music accessories began with Super-Sensitive Musical Strings, a brand that was founded in 1930 by Ed Wackerle. Wackerle was a trained engineer and amateur violinist who created the brand after becoming frustrated with the quality of strings available. From those frustrations came the Red Label string line, which remains Super-Sensitive's flagship and a popular brand with orchestra educators and their



beginner and intermediate stringed-instrument students.

In 1967, Vincent Cavanaugh and his son, John, purchased Super-Sensitive. They relocated the company from Chicago to Sarasota, Fla., and the father-son team began a wave of innovation for the brand and the company.

"During the 1970s and '80s, my dad did thousands and thousands of experiments trying to make a better string," said Jim, John's son. "And we're still doing experiments all the time."

Those experiments have produced innovations like the Old Fiddler line, popular with country and bluegrass string players as well as the Supreme string line for cello and bass.

John Cavanaugh is still active in the business today serving as its CEO. And so is his wife, Ellen, who is currently

the executive vice president.

EXPANDING INTO NEW MARKETS

While Super-Sensitive remains the company's largest brand, Cavanaugh has made a conscious effort to expand beyond the orchestral string market.

In 2001, the company purchased Black Diamond Strings, a 123-year-old guitar string and pick line that was a logical complement to Super-Sensitive.

Jim Cavanaugh said the company has been working hard to make Black Diamond a high-quality, premium brand.

"Guitar strings is a cutthroat business," he said. "But we think we've got a good opportunity there."

He said there may be even more opportunity with Bari Woodwind Supplies, a company

that Cavanaugh bought eight years ago. "The Bari side has really taken off," Cavanaugh said. "We've got our plastic, hard rubber and metal mouthpieces in that line, and we're doing quite well. We even make a hybrid, which is a combination between metal and hard rubber. We're the first ones to do it."

Cavanaugh said it's a big change from the early days of that purchase, when the management team was in overdrive learning the new market.

"We got some key players in here to really take it over," he said. "We had to get new molds made, and put a lot of investment into the brand, like building new, in-house machinery to help decrease our labor costs by about 40 percent."

Along with Bari's strength in mouthpieces, Cavanaugh said he sees opportunity with the brand's synthetic reed business.

"This is our answer to cane," he said. "It's 100 percent consistent. When you buy a box of cane reeds, you might have three good ones, three so-so and the rest unusable. These are 100 percent good."

Cavanaugh said acceptance for the product is slow, but he's seen this trend before.

"It reminds me of when we transitioned from gut violin strings to nylon strings," he said. "People would say, 'No, no, I've got to have my gut strings.' Finally, people started converting." **MI**

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DISTRIBUTION

Gemini Partners With Korg & More

In September, Korg & More became a distributor for Gemini DJ and pro audio for Germany and Austria as well as for the Benelux Division of Musik Meyer.

“Gemini is on the cutting edge of the technology needed to stay successful in this fast changing industry and it’s great to be able to support the re-launch and growth of this iconic brand in two very important European markets,” said Frank Sawusch, general manager of sales and marketing at Korg & More. geminisound.com; korg.com

Hal Leonard Now Distributing JamHub

Hal Leonard has teamed up with JamHub to exclusively distribute their systems and accessories to the U.S. MI trade. The deal became effective Oct. 1.

“JamHub studios help to make more players and are now conveniently available to retailers from Hal Leonard,” said JamHub president and CEO Steve Skillings. halleonard.com

Waves Audio Teams Up With Eventide

Eventide will join Waves Audio’s Virtual Stock Software Distribution (VSSD) fulfillment program as an alternative means of product distribution. End users now have access to the complete range of Eventide software products from their authorized Eventide U.S. dealer, and the dealer will never be out of stock. Additionally, using VSSD, authorized U.S. dealers can sell software products while eliminating inventory management and unnecessary stocking costs.

After customers purchase an Eventide software product, the dealer will enter the order number and instantly receive unique serial numbers for the product purchased. These numbers unlock the copy-protected software, which is available for download at the customer’s convenience.

“We are delighted to join the Waves VSSD virtual distribution platform,” said Ray Maxwell, Eventide vice president of sales and marketing. “For the first time ever, retailers around the world can deliver Eventide plug-ins to their customers instantly.” waves.com; eventide.com

L-ACOUSTICS | ARTIST APPROVED

MUMFORD & SONS EMPLOYS L-ACOUSTICS

Montreal-based Solotech provided Mumford & Sons with L-Acoustics concert sound systems and support for their “The Full English” tour.

According to Jamie Howieson, Mumford & Sons’ audio system engineer and sound designer, the production crew has been deploying 28 K1 mains and six KARA down-fills, plus 16 K1-SB flown subs with 16 SB28

below for most shed dates. Out-fill hangs are comprised of 24 KUDO, with 10 dV-DOSC for lip-fill.

“This system lends itself very nicely to the band’s sonic requirements and we’ve been hearing many compliments from local promoters at the venues on its musicality and coverage, both of which are remarkable,” Howieson said. l-acoustics.com



L-Acoustics in use at a Mumford & Sons concert.

NAMM | EVENTS

NAMM Foundation Hosts SupportMusic Forums Across U.S.

The NAMM Foundation recently kicked off the school year with coast-to-coast SupportMusic community forums to raise awareness about the importance of music and arts education. With The John Lennon Educational Tour Bus acting as a mobile ambassador for music education, events will be held at high schools in Lansing, Mich., Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia.

In other news, NAMM recently signed a contract with the City of Anaheim and the Anaheim Convention Center to continue to hold The NAMM Show there through 2018.

“Our members value the

relationship and appreciate the efforts of the entire Anaheim community in making the NAMM Show a continued success,” said Joe Lamond, president and CEO of NAMM. namm.org



APPOINTMENTS

Community Names New CEO

Community Professional Loudspeakers has appointed Steve Johnson as CEO. Johnson has more than 25 years of engineering, marketing and management experience in the pro-audio and communications industries. In his new role, Johnson will oversee the company’s overall business and sales strategies.



Johnson



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LANIKAI UKES | EVENT

Lanikai Hosts Ukulele Fest

On Sept. 14, Lanikai Ukuleles hosted a Ukulele Fest in coordination with Best In Music’s anniversary event in Ogden, Utah. The day included an informational session on the Lanikai brand, a free ukulele circle event and an open mic competition open to all local ukulele musicians.

“This was a great opportunity to connect with ukulele players at every level,” said Product Manager Leon Lewis, who attended the event. “Ukulele

enthusiasts inquired about our new products, first time players purchased new instruments for the uke circle, and the area’s top uke talent showcased their skills in hopes of winning a brand new Lanikai UkeSB.”

This event marks the beginning of Lanikai’s forthcoming national campaign aimed at aligning music stores with their local ukulele communities. Similar uke fests are being planned with key retailers across the country in 2014. lanikaiukes.com

STEINWAY | ACQUISITION

Paulson & Co., Completes Steinway Acquisition

Investment firm Paulson & Co., completed the acquisition of Steinway Musical Instruments on Sept. 19.

“Over the last 160 years, Steinway has built an unprecedented reputation for excellence,” said John Paulson, president of Paulson & Co. “We will uphold that tradition with the continued uncompromising pursuit of perfection,”

“As we look forward, we expect the entire Steinway family — dealers, artists and employees — to benefit from the continued execution of our

business strategies under Paulson’s ownership,” said Michael Sweeney, CEO of Steinway.

The acquisition was made through an offer of \$40 per share. As of the expiration of the offer, a total of 11,005,781 shares of Steinway’s common stock were validly tendered into the offer. In accordance with the merger agreement, the parties completed the acquisition by an affiliate of Paulson with Steinway continuing as the surviving corporation and an affiliate of Paulson. steinway.com

BREEDLOVE | CHARITY

BREEDLOVE DONATES GUITAR FOR AMERICAN RIVERS

Breedlove Guitars donated a Breedlove American Roots D/SRe-H dreadnought guitar to the American Rivers Tour, which included The Infamous Stringdusters, in partnership with conservation non-profit American Rivers.

After the tour, the guitar was auctioned off for \$2,400 to a Stringdusters fan in Columbia, Md. The auction proceeds went to support American Rivers’ work to protect and restore rivers.

“We share a belief in conservation and were delighted to be approached by The Infamous Stringdusters to work together on this project,” said Ryan Bouslaugh, Breedlove’s head of artist relations. breedlovemusic.com



IN MEMORIAM

Jo Edstrom

Jo Edstrom passed away on Sept. 10. She was 102.

Edstrom was the widow of Harold “Hal” Edstrom, who co-founded the Hal Leonard Corp. in 1947 with his brother Everett “Leonard” Edstrom and Roger Busdicker. Edstrom married Harold in 1938, who preceded her in death in 1996.

Art Jenson

Art Jenson passed away on Sept. 3. He was 81.

After working on the editorial staff at Zeb Billings Music Publishing, Jenson helped formed Learning United in 1970, which later became a division of Hal Leonard. In 1976, he founded Jenson Publishing, and in 1989 sold his company to Hal Leonard. Jenson stayed on with Hal Leonard and retired in 1991.



Drumming Icons Hold West Coast Artist Session

Executives from Remo, Zildjian and Vic Firth recently hosted a West Coast artist session at CenterStaging in Burbank, Calif. The artist relations and marketing teams from all three companies helped, as well. Over 300 artists attended representing many top drummers in the industry today. Sitting from left are the executives: Remo CEO Remo Belli, Zildjian CEO Craigie Zildjian, Vic Firth Founder and President Vic Firth, and Remo President Brock Kaericher. remo.com; zildjian.com; vicfirth.com

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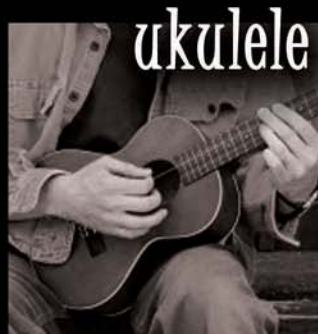
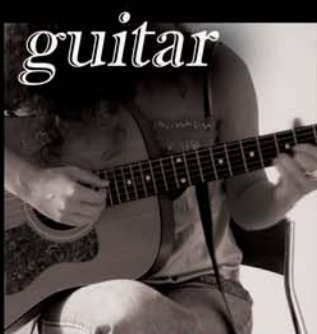


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Musical Instrument Displays



IDEAS

Inside**IDEAS** > The Lesson Room Page 36 > Good Practice Page 38

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLUM

GOING? OR ... GONE?

How many NAMM shows have you attended? For me, Winter NAMM 2014 will be number 91.

Let me just tell you, that's a lot of lunches leaning on the convention center trash cans!

I started as a young kid, tagging along with my parents to Chicago, and walking from room to room in the Conrad Hilton to see each exciting exhibit. The big guys took multi-room suites, but most displays occupied a single hotel room with the bed removed. It was such a thrill to see my musical heroes conducting demos in the close confines of a hotel room and a blast to try out the latest gear. But it was more than star power and gear envy that made those early shows so important to me. I was being molded into a member of the society we call the music products industry.

EVERYONE GREW UP

The show grew and eventually graduated to the convention center format we know today. Exhibits became more elaborate, as did the demonstrations. I recall getting so excited that I couldn't wait to get back to my



store to start selling. I saw the Yamaha exhibit in the lower level of McCormick Place where Toto demonstrated the brand new DX7, and holy cow did I make money on that product, because I happened to be there and recognized the opportunity. I can only imagine the impact on the course of my business if I had decided that it “cost too much” to attend that show.

Not long later, as some started to whine about the “wake on the lake,” I scored an invitation to visit the private suite of Ray Kurzweil for the unveiling of the K250. While my competitors scratched their heads trying to figure out how to catch up in the red-hot keyboard craze at

the time, I just kept enjoying one exclusive product after the next. At that same trade show, I had breakfast one morning with a group of fellow retailers from around the country, and went home with enough great ideas to pay for the trip to the show one-hundred-fold.

THE PRICE OF ABSENCE

Despite all my NAMM show successes, I guess I just came to take it for granted. Perhaps the starry-eyed amazement of such a spectacle started to feel commonplace. And because of this, I made the unfortunate decision in the summer of 2007 to skip the summer show in Austin, Texas. I had a dozen reasons to justify my decision at the time ... the cost, the time, other commitments, the less-than-stellar turnout the year prior.

But I was dead wrong. Skipping that show was a costly lesson learned. I allowed myself and my company to fall out of the mainstream; to miss the important networking opportunities; to lose the advantage of my own keen observations of new products, product and business trends; and to miss the always-valuable NAMM Professional

Development sessions. With that costly decision, I lost my edge.

JUST ONE MORE THING

Did that decision matter? Did it change that course of history? Well, here's a simple morsel for your consideration: I closed my business by the end of 2008! Coincidental? Well, it would be naïve to think that one NAMM show could have reversed the string of issues that eventually caused my demise.

But what if I had run into just one industry colleague there, who had one great idea that could have helped me? What if the Breakfast of Champions provided one pearl of wisdom that I could have put to work to reverse a crisis situation? There's no way of knowing if anything at that show might have helped me. The only thing for certain is that not attending guaranteed that I'd get nothing out of the show.

I sincerely hope to see you at the show. Don't do it for me — do it for you! **MI**

Gerson Rosenbloom is the Vice President of Strategic Management at Sweetwater Sound, the former president of Medley Music and a past NAMM chairman. Email him at: gersonmusicinc@gmail.com

THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

Teachers Know Best

Your teachers are your direct line to the customers that take music lessons at your store. They interact with students and parents regularly.

So when was the last time you looked at your store from your teachers' point of view?

Interestingly enough, you will find ways to improve what's going on at your store from their input. Your teachers have a vested interest in your store, because it's where they make their income. Independent contractor or not, they view teaching as their job. Not to mention, many of your teachers have likely been at your store longer than your part-time employees.

Many TV shows today, such as "Undercover Boss" and "Bar Rescue," can show you what happens when "the boss" is not in the store. Staff goofing off and providing poor answers to customer questions are just two of the ways.

Those sort of issues are part of what makes your teachers so valuable. They hear what issues parents and students have at the store — issues that you as an owner or manager may never hear about. They have their ears to the ground in a way that your staff never can. So listen to them. Your music teachers know about issues concerning your staff's performance in the day-to-day procedures that affect them.



Input from your teachers regarding your store can improve more than just your lessons program

ASK QUESTIONS

First, have an agenda of open-ended questions, such as, what do you feel is going well at the store?

Is there a staff member that is making this happen? How are your student lesson roster numbers? What do your students and parents like about the store? Dislike? What do you think could be improved at the store? How

do you feel we are using your talents at the store?

Write down what the teachers tell you. It makes this meeting productive, and it lets the teacher know you are serious about their input.

You may find out that the teachers all cringe when they hear certain store staff try to explain your lessons program or explain

what makes your teachers the right choice to sign up for lessons with. You may find out that the students and parents don't feel a friendly vibe at the store. Or, you may find that one of your staff members is doing a fantastic job with the teachers and students and you've overlooked them.

REAP THE BENEFITS

Your teachers may have other skills that aren't being utilized. Maybe they are willing to help train your staff on basic woodwind products or willing to go out and help at the local school music programs. Not to mention, teachers are always a great resource when it comes to product demos for your store's YouTube channel or website.

After talking to the teachers, you may also find out that there are books and supplies that you should be stocking for your students.

The best result is that this kind of communication with your teachers will help break down any wall that has developed between you and your teachers. The teachers will feel that they are valued in your business plan, and your lesson program and store will benefit from their input. **MI**

Pete Gamber is a 35-year veteran of music retailing and music lessons. He specializes in music lesson programs and music retail consulting. He can be reached at petegambermusic@gmail.com.

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by Alfred Music

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GOOD PRACTICE | BY GRANT BILLINGS

Does It Deliver?

A local radio station once invited me to a luncheon featuring a very impressive marketing expert. The turnout for the event was remarkable, with probably 300 attendees, an impressive stage and lots of station-branded swag. Even the sound was well done.

Midway through the presentation, the marketing guru said something that I will never forget. “Before you engage in any advertising or marketing campaign, ask yourself one question: ‘How will I track this?’”



“If you don’t know the answer or can’t think of a way to track it,” he continued, “don’t do it.”

Since that luncheon, I have saved thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours in not pursuing advertising that I don’t know works.

The standard marketing expense target for a retail store is 5 percent of sales. Using this standard, a well-run business with \$500,000 in annual sales would want to keep total advertising costs around \$25,000.

Keep in mind that these expenses can take on a life of their own and include your costs to maintain and host your website, all mass media advertising, direct mail, and every lunch you buy and every pen, calendar, and gift certificate you give away.

It is also important to know how much of your time is spent on marketing. If you work 2,500 hours per year and spend five hours per week on marketing, marketing is taking 10 percent of your time. This “expense” should include any time you spend planning, creating, proofing, and listening to pitches from media salespeople. If you track this for two weeks, you’ll have a pretty good idea as to how much time you spend each year.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO GET REAL

Now, it’s time to cut what you know doesn’t work. It is incredibly easy to run a newspaper ad again, sign up for another three months of TV ads, and to renew the Yellow Pages ad. These outlets want us to just keep doing what we’re doing.

But effective marketing has to be strategic. Begin by looking at every marketing dollar you spent last year and putting each item into one of three categories:

1. I know it works.
2. I think it works.
3. I hope it works.

For the next 90 days, focus your marketing dollars — and your time — only on what you know works. You can find out what works with a low-tech tactic: Ask every customer how they found out about you. Write their answer on a slip of paper and drop it in a fishbowl. Once each week, make stacks of the answers. You’ll probably only have four or five stacks, but the information will be incredibly valuable.

Just as revealing as their actual answers will be the responses you don’t get. If you’ve been spending your hard-earned capital on something and nobody tells you that it brought them in, they’ve just given you a great idea of where to start cutting.

It can be hard. Countless times, I’ve sat across the table from somebody I really liked and told them I was not going to renew. But the wonderful thing about an effective marketing strategy is, the more you invest in it, the more it returns. As sales go up by your smarter spending, you’ll have more marketing dollars available to try new things.

The best money you’ll spend promoting your business will be the money you took from something that didn’t work and investing it is something that you can prove leads to sales. **MI**

Grant Billings is owner of Billings Piano Gallery in Madison, Wis.

Focus your marketing dollars — and your time — only on what you know works



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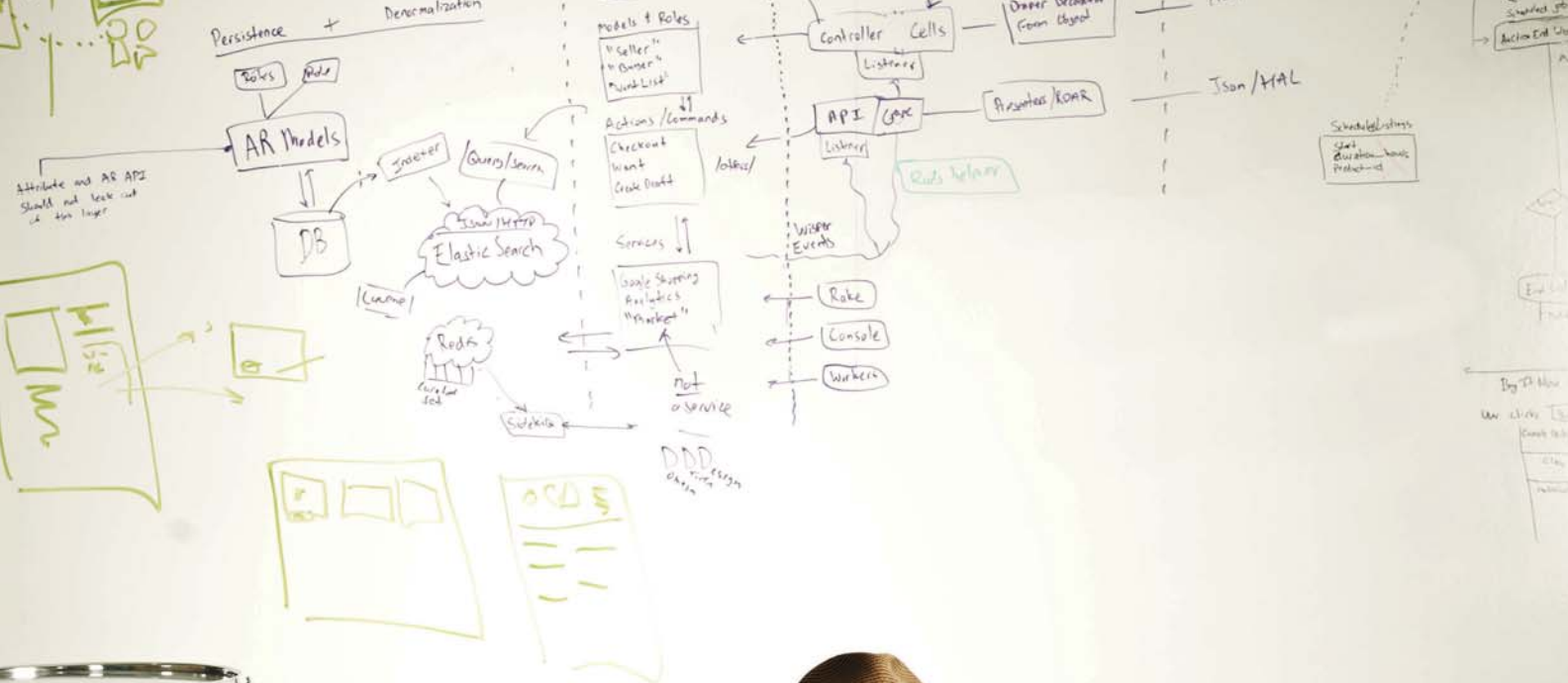
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CHICAGO MUSIC EXCHANGE | BY KATIE KAILUS

WHEN THE HOTTEST ARTISTS PLAY THE WINDY CITY, THEY'RE SURE TO MAKE A STOP AT CHICAGO MUSIC EXCHANGE, A STYLISH SHOWROOM FEATURING SOME OF THE WORLD'S FINEST INSTRUMENTS. THE HIGH-END CLIENTELE IS DRAWN TO DAVID KALT'S SHOP BY ITS COMBINATION OF EXPERT SERVICE, UNPARALLELED SELECTION AND VINTAGE VIBE.

Chicago Music Exchange is something out of a rock star's dream. The open floor plan of the enormous main showroom immediately offers a relaxed, luxe feel, complete with oriental rugs and lavish chandeliers. There are no brand names visible anywhere among the hundreds of new and used guitars hanging on the walls. There are, however, cozy couches.



'We have created an environment where musicians really feel comfortable. And if they're relaxed, they're way more likely to consume.'

But it is not just the stunning appearance that keeps the pros and aficionados coming in, said owner David Kalt. It is the sum of all the parts.

“We have created an environment where musicians really feel comfortable,” he said. “And if they are relaxed and can try things, they are way more likely to consume. In an environment that makes it so they can just get in and out, they aren’t going to try out stuff.”

The Lumineers, Imagine Dragons, Adele and Smashing Pumpkins have all visited in recent years. Even Johnny Depp has dropped by a few times. And while these visits naturally generate excitement, CME’s low-key staff of 28 — almost all musicians — are trained in making CME feel like a place they themselves would want to patronize.

“There’s no pressure to buy anything,” Kalt said. “If the vibe is what gets them here, it’s the service that keeps them here. I had Mumford & Sons in once, and they had a 7 p.m. show at the Chicago Theater downtown, and they were here until 6:45 p.m. They came in because our staff is chill. They came to play and experience instruments that you can’t normally get your hands on anywhere else.”

BEYOND GUITARS

Kalt himself has a unique mix of experience that informs the business he’s created. A guitarist who spent years in Internet start-ups (he created travel database software company ClientBASE in 1993, prior to starting online brokerage firm optionsXpress), Kalt purchased CME in June 2010. It had been in operation for two decades, but

Kalt saw opportunity to expand on nearly every front.

The store’s 30,000 square feet now house the main showroom; an adjacent drum shop; offices and warehouse space; a new bass-only room, which opened at the end of September; and the headquarters of Reverb.com, an online marketplace for new and used gear.

Despite its location in the basement, the bass room feels just as hip as the main showroom, while featuring its own laid back vibe. Two practice rooms offer bassists their own private space to test out gear. CME has close to 15 different brands of basses on the walls, including smaller brands that

aren’t known solely for their basses.

Kalt said the warm reception for the space has renewed his appreciation for the importance of display and merchandising that appeals to an expert clientele.

“The basses used to be just tucked in with the guitars,” Kalt said. “I felt that sales were good, but it was harder to sell. Instruments such as Reverend basses might have gotten buried in the Reverend guitar section. A lot of smaller companies might have been lost. So the element of concentration and proximity,

‘WE COME UP WITH CREATIVE WAYS TO THINK ABOUT OUR INSTRUMENTS. GOOD MERCHANDISING IS WHAT’S GOING TO GET THE CONSUMER EXCITED. AND I THINK THAT IS SOMETHING THAT’S LACKING IN OUR INDUSTRY.’



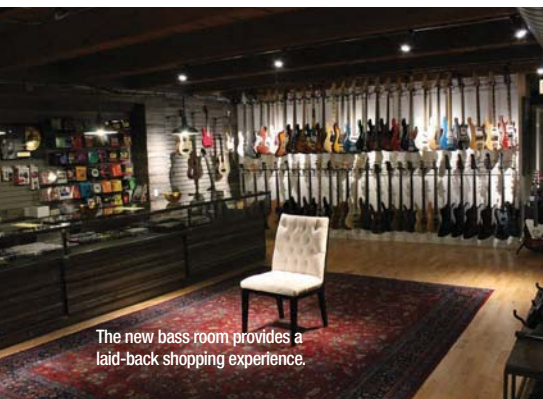


and the coziness, with two practice rooms and a couch have really added to the vibe down here.”

Kalt is hoping the bass space will see success similar to the drum room, which opened about two years ago and is already up 50 percent over last year.

“When you start out [a new product category] like drums, it’s hard to get a lot of vintage kits right away, so we began with predominantly new instruments,” Kalt said. “Now, about 20-25 percent of what we are selling is vintage.”

The mix is already strongly supported by Reverb.com, a website Kalt launched in



The new bass room provides a laid-back shopping experience.

January 2013, where musicians and dealers can buy, sell or trade used gear. At press time, the site had done about \$1.2 million on 3,500 transactions.

With Reverb only taking 3.5 percent of each transaction, Kalt said that the goal of the site is to remove the price friction that exists in such platforms as Amazon and eBay.

“Even at brick-and-mortar stores, there is too much of a spread between what someone is willing to pay for something and what the intrinsic value is,” he said. “At 3.5 percent we open up all kinds of possibilities, and we are seeing that every day. Basically someone who couldn’t make a living selling guitars on eBay because of its 12 percent can now afford it.”

And it’s not just end-users selling on Reverb. Kalt estimated about 800 MI retailers have sold on the site. Including the name of the seller’s store and a “banner” on the seller’s page helps promote other brick-and-mortar stores and creates a feeling of community, Kalt said. While CME is both a buyer and

seller on the site, Kalt is running the two entities as separate companies.

“The word that we are hearing a lot from our sellers is that a lot of dealers are buying from dealers,” he said. “There’s definitely a sense of community because it’s not eBay.”

According to Kalt, what makes Reverb stand apart from eBay and Amazon is its expert sensibility.

“Websites like eBay are not very good at telling a story or curating it into a really interesting story or context,” he said. “We at Reverb take a lot of time doing that. We have a signature guitar section, offset guitars, funky vintage, Japanese vintage, and so on. We’ve come up with really creative ways to think about our instruments.

“I think that comes back to what we are doing at the store here — getting good at merchandising is what’s going to get the consumer excited. And that is something that is lacking in our industry. There isn’t a lot of innovating.”

Kalt foresees Reverb doing about \$10 million in transactions next year. “We think that pot is really big and our platform is going to help sell that. I do projections for four years. So, in 2015 I see Reverb doing about \$40 million and the following year \$100 million. That seems very doable.”

LOOKING AHEAD

As exceptional as the CME experience is, Kalt makes it all sound utterly practical. In the future, he said he plans to continue to specialize in guitars, basses and drums.

“I feel like we have a really strong presence in these categories, and I don’t want to venture too heavily into pro-audio or keyboards,” he said. “I feel like there is still room to grow here.”

Eventually, he would like to get into the lessons business, by forging “a strategic relationship with someone who’s passionate about it,” but only if they can take place across the street from the store.

“I don’t want to put lessons in this space,” Kalt said. “We’re the opposite of most retailers who want student foot traffic. If I get too much of that, the rock stars will stop coming.”

And no one wants that. Rock on. **MI**

GUITAR HERO

A LITTLE PROMO PROJECT GOES BIG-TIME VIRAL



CME employee Alex Chadwick didn’t think much of it the day his father informed him that a video he had put up on the Chicago Music Exchange YouTube channel, “100 Riffs (A Brief History of Rock ‘N’ Roll),” had reached 1,000 views.

“I was on a factory tour of Taylor [Guitars] in San Diego, and my Dad kept texting me,” said the sales manager. “And I thought, ‘Oh, that’s great.’ It kept going, but I was oblivious.”

At press time, the number of views had climbed above 6.7 million.

Launched in June 2012, the video is exactly what it sounds like: one shot of Chadwick, sitting in the store with a ‘58 Strat, playing 100 recognizable riffs in a row, from Chet Atkins to ZZ Top. The store’s logo appears in the upper left corner, which makes for a lot of brand impressions for CME, as well as for Chadwick.

Recently, a medical conference in Los Angeles flew him out to play the riffs as part of their entertainment, and he says his band (called “Chadwick”) has been more active since the video went viral. He was interviewed on NPR’s “Weekend Edition” and numerous Chicago-area media outlets.

There are other popular videos on the CME channel — an in-store performance by jazz drummer Brian Blade (160,000 views), and a funny demo of a limited edition Bohlin Joker guitar, played by Batman (30,000) — but nothing else really comes close. Still, Chadwick himself, son of a music store owner, remains modest about the attention.

“It still doesn’t feel like a thing that happened to me,” he said. **MI**

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THE TUBA EXCHANGE

'I'M THE OWNER. I WANT TO TALK TO CUSTOMERS AND KNOW WHO THEY ARE AND WHERE THEY'RE FROM.'

There's a lot to be said for a store name that promises exactly what it can deliver. At the Tuba Exchange in Durham, N.C., customers know precisely what they can expect when they walk in the door: a comprehensive inventory of tubas and euphoniums, and a staff that knows them inside and out.

"I think it was a very clever title by the original owner, because you hear that, and you automatically assume that we know what we're talking about," said Dan Miner, marketing and sales manager. "And when people talk to us, we confirm that."

The operation's six-person staff may be small, but in terms of tuba know-how, it's mighty. Repair technician Mike Morse has more than 30 years of experience and can repair all kinds of wind instruments. For much of his career he's worked alongside school bid specialist Kevin Smith, whom Miner describes as "a walking encyclopedia of musical knowledge." Salesman Steve Truckenbrod is a professional tuba player and has lots of connections in the tuba community around the world.

Miner, a recent hire, spent 14 years as a band director in North Carolina and Virginia. "Being a band director, I know what band directors are looking for," he said. "They know that I can relate."

Rounding out the picture are former Sousaphone player Luc Kerkhof and his wife, Betty Black, who purchased the business in 2011 from founder Vincent Simonetti. They designated the first year a time of observation, resisting the urge to tinker with a business recipe that had worked so well since the 1980s.

Only then did they start introducing logistical changes, such as an updated computer system. But for the most part, they stuck with the original formula of tuba expertise and a focused inventory. In just 7,000 square feet of retail and warehouse space, they have 50 models on display in the showroom and more than 250 instruments in stock, ranging from student models to high-end Miraphone and Adams tubas. They sell instruments all over the United States and throughout the world, and are also the exclusive North American distributor of St. Petersburg tubas.

"We are looking to move to a larger loca-

The Top Secret

"A level of understanding with your customers helps them to relax and helps the whole transaction go smoother. And we get a lot of repeat customers that way."

— Dan Miner

tion, because we are really stuffed to the rafters," Kerkhof said. Until then, Kerkhof continues to keep his current store friendly. "I'm the owner. I want to talk to [customers] and know who they are and where they're from." — John Janowiak



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KNOW THY PRODUCTS

FOLKMUSICIAN

'NOWADAYS, YOUR DATABASE IS YOUR BUSINESS. THE MAJORITY OF SMALL BUSINESSES OVERLOOK BACKUPS.'

Sometimes, being a successful specialty retailer means building a business model that's impossible to scale — counterintuitive as that might seem. That definitely applies in the case of Reno, Nev.-based Folkmusician, seller and servicer of mandolins, plus other folk instruments, such as banjos, fiddles and dulcimers.

Co-owner Robert Fear has become known nationwide for his expertise in setting up mandolins for maximum playability, but that has limited his ability to dedicate time and energy to instrument sales.

"We are saturated to that point where we have to attempt to retard the sales, or we can't keep up with the setup work," said Fear, who founded his business in 1999 in Redding, Calif., and moved to his current location in 2011. "It's predominantly the setup work that drives the business, more so than the retail side, and we've been able to carve out a niche there because there's virtually no competition. That's been the good and bad side of our business. So we've protected ourselves from competition, but also put a growth limit on our business."

Which is all just fine for Fear and his wife, Amelie, who learned the value of staying small during a supply crisis in 2002 that almost put their then-booming business in danger of going under.

Since then, the scaled-back, do-it-yourself operation has come to thrive in a niche market that essentially found them, not the other way around.

"I like the mandolin, and I've always been into acoustic music, but that was about it — until we suddenly started selling and servicing more and more," he said. "At some point we realized that this apparently is our niche, and my expertise in the mandolin simply came from the sheer volume of them coming through the shop, living and breathing mandolins day in and day out."

That level of dedication and knowledge has been key to the survival of his business.

The Top Secret

"You need to enjoy what you do and hire like-minded individuals. The customer will sense your enthusiasm. If you're not enthusiastic, they're not going to be very enthusiastic about buying from you — they can go on over to the big box guys."

— Robert Fear

"Had we not done something that the competition couldn't do, we probably wouldn't have survived the recession," he said. "We only survived because no one can emulate us."

Another key revelation that came to Fear while on the job is the importance of



implementing efficient business systems. Everything from purchasing orders down to shipping has been automated in-house and has let Folkmusician maintain a high volume with a minimum of outsourcing. Bookkeeping has been streamlined to the point where every cent earned or spent can be tracked at a moment's notice.

"QuickBooks is mandatory, and you should really learn it inside-out," Fear said. "Just like they tell you when you're a musician or artist, the first thing you learn is accounting, or that's pretty much the end of your career. It also doesn't hurt to learn Excel formulas so you can pull your data and do further analyzing on it. I came into this with no business sense at all, so we got going at a pretty good volume with poor accounting and paid the price later, having to go through and clean up the mess."

Fear also said he can't overemphasize the importance of daily computer backups. "Nowadays, your database is your business," he said. "And the vast majority of small businesses are overlooking backups. If you haven't backed up for a week and things crash, it's hard to piece back together a week's worth of transactions."

Folkmusician is in the midst of upgrading its website to make it easier for customers to shop online. Fear, who does all of the site design and back-end work himself, is aiming for an enterprise-level system.

"Amazon's site is the standard for e-commerce right now, and the closer you get to that, the better," he said. "The ability to compare products is very important for our product range. Customers want to know more than fret size and basic specifications — they want details. And with the vast array of products, even at our niche level, it's important for customers to navigate and get a feel for the differences in the products."

Like so many other aspects of his niche operation, Fear's website has been a valuable learning experience that requires study and patience. "Currently our website is an example of what we don't want," Fear said, noting that its architecture dates back to 2008. "We're testing now, hoping that it will be ready in the next month or two. But we might have to wait until after Christmas." — Ed Enright

THE POWER OF ONE

DOWNTOWN PIANO WORKS

A couple of self-described type-A personalities, Dan and Theresa Shykind aren't ones to sit on their hands and wait for business to happen. While contemplating a new career path in 2008, they had the idea of opening a store that would sell Yamaha pianos exclusively.

The couple opened Downtown Piano Works in Frederick, Md., in September of that year — just in time for the economic downturn. This might seem like an odd time to launch a business, but ironically, their timing had its perks. "If you had time or money to invest, that was the time to do it," Theresa said.

The Top Secret

"I don't really want to buy from someone in a suit. I feel like they're just trying to get my money. It makes the customer feel out of place, because they don't come in dressed like that."

— Theresa Shykind

Focusing on a single line might also seem unusual, but that, too, has its advantages. The Shykind's point out that Steinway dealers focus on one line, as do Apple dealers. So why not Yamaha? "Yamaha has such a broad compass of models," Theresa said. "I don't think you could do it with most brands, but Yamaha is a perfect fit."

In just a few years, Downtown Piano Works has become a major player in its market with little traditional advertising. Instead, the advertising budget is put towards a free concert series held in their store. In five years, they've held 90 concerts featuring such acclaimed artists as Leon Fleisher. The concerts are so popular — even garnering reviews in the *Washington Post* — that, for the 65-person capacity venue, each concert has a waiting list of more than 100 people. "We draw in 1,500 people a year," Dan said.

The Shykind's have been asked to get into the concert booking business at larger venues. But, according to Dan, they're not interested. "I wouldn't have them walking by my lovely pianos to get in." — John Janowiak



FIRST-STRING STAFFING

GIVENS VIOLINS

Givens Violins' proprietor Claire Givens does more than just maintain an inventory of quality instruments that range in price from \$600 to hundred of thousands of dollars. She runs a top-notch workshop and staffs it with the most expert violin technicians she can find.

"The workshop is really the engine of my business," Givens said of the 36-year-old,

Minneapolis-based violin specialty store. "I've got three trained violin-makers working for me — they've been here between 16 and 26 years — and they understand the most discerning players. I've spent a lot of money on hiring the very best people for that workshop."

Violins, violas and cellos require an extremely high level of maintenance if players want to achieve the quality of sound and instrument response their profession demands.

"We offer free check-ups on instruments we sell," said Givens. "They look at the relationship of the bridge to the soundpost, and they listen to the player to see if they have any comments about the sound changing."

Just like in her workshop, Givens demands the highest level of professionalism from her sales staff. New salespeople take part in a three-month in-house training program that involves detailed instruction as well as coaching scenarios.

"New employees can't understand the concerns of the customers or anticipate problems, so the training is really significant," she said. "And for employees who have already gone through the basic training, it continues throughout each day [through] coaching from our senior salespeople."

Givens Violins maintains excellent relationships with violin teachers in a multi-state area that includes parts of Minnesota, Wisconsin, North and South Dakota, and Nebraska. And when it comes to the touchy subject of giving kickbacks to teachers who direct stu-

'FIND THE THINGS THAT BRING CUSTOMERS IN THE DOOR AND MAKE THEM COMPETITIVE WITH THE INTERNET.'

The Top Secret

"Have the very best workshop [staff] you can afford and provide an environment in which they can concentrate on their work. Don't ask them to work the front counter, don't ask them to be salespeople, don't ask them to answer the phone."

— Claire Givens

dent referrals to the store, Givens said a transparent policy is best.

"I struggled with [non-disclosed kickbacks] from an ethical viewpoint for years, because it never felt comfortable to me that the students were depending on the advice of teachers that were getting paid by the dealers," she said. "So my solution was to have a fully disclosed policy — it's all on our web page — of sending gift certificates to the teachers and being able to say to the customers, 'I know your teacher helped you make this [buying] decision, and we're happy to send them a gift certificate.' And they always are thrilled."

The certificates range from between \$25–\$250. "That helps us maintain our relationship with the teachers because they don't get paid as much as they should," Givens said.

Givens offered some parting advice for specialty and indie music retailers.

"Find the things that bring customers in the door and make them competitive with everything else on the Internet or elsewhere," she said. "For the violin world, that's strings and re-hairing bows. We have a full-time bow person here. So I remain competitive on my re-hair prices and my strings. There's nothing online that beats us." — Ed Enright



Photo: Sarah Whiting

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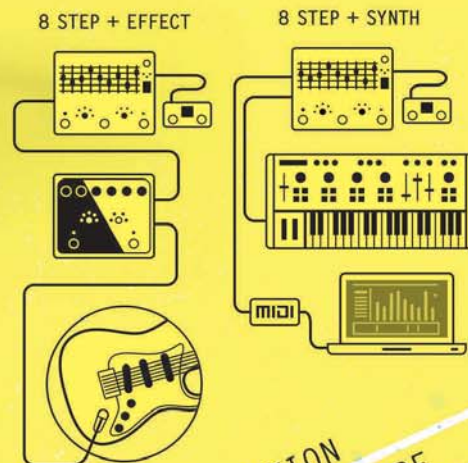
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KEEP IT UP

Selling higher-end accessories takes finesse – but the benefits go past the bottom line

BY DAVID ZIVAN

“I haven’t come across that money-is-no-object guy in quite some time,” said Anthony Thompson, pro audio department manager at Alto Music in Middletown, N.Y. “I haven’t seen that guy at least since ’08.”

Most retailers can relate to that observation. And yet products that may objectively be called expensive continue to sell across the country. There are of course many factors at work behind this phenomenon, the passion of music makers being the most significant.

But retailers should also be



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THE PRINCIPLES

Here are a few guidelines to help you find the upside to the high end



Point Out the Little Things.

“There are always guys who will skimp on accessories,” **Thompson** noted. A big part of selling higher end accessories is reminding customers about the critical functions they perform. Excellent guitars need excellent cases (and straps and picks and strings).

Don't Get in the Way.

“Enable people to spend the money they want to spend,” **Faltin** said. “It’s all about making customers feel good about their hobby. We sell happiness.”



Make the Ask ...

“In pro audio especially, if someone buys a mixing board, you might sell them a table or a 500 series processor,” **Duncan** said.

... And Don't Undersell.

“Customers always have budgetary restraints,” **McCann** said. “But among passionate people, the budget expands to accommodate the passion.”



aware of the fact that, even in a sluggish economy, the high-end does not slow down as much as other sectors. This past spring, for instance, Reuters reported that at Tiffany & Co., the jewelry retailer whose name is practically synonymous with luxury, sales were lagging in their lower-end offerings. “High-end jewelry,” on the other hand, had been selling “briskly.”

This is not to advocate selling Strats in robin egg blue boxes. But it’s worth remembering that some customers are willing to spend. “For people for whom money is no consideration,” said Leslie Faltin, owner of Instrumental Music Centers in Tucson, Ariz., “everything is under consideration.”

Hopefully your store has sales training and structures in place to accommodate those customers as well as any who walk in the door. And yet in some cases, especially in add-on sales, floor staff will be reluctant to complete their closing. After all, they might think, the ticket already looks big: Why accessorize?

And that’s a disservice to a customer who just made your month a lot brighter.

“If a salesperson does not say anything, maybe the customer just gets home and puts on the same old crappy strap he has had for a long time,” said Bryan McCann, owner of Instrumental Music Center, a three-store powerhouse in California (and no relation to the Arizona operation of the same name). That’s a high-margin sale missed — and a customer who has left the store without the proper gear.

Having the products on hand in the first place is a useful way to compete for customers’ attention. “In a small store, we have the ability to know what’s going on in our micro markets, and carry the cool stuff that our community is asking about,” McCann said.

Matt Duncan, a senior category manager responsible for amps, effects and accessories at Sweetwater Sound in Ft. Wayne, Ind., said that, like most retailers, his operation loves products with what he calls “high velocity” — items that may carry less profit, but move fast. But higher-dollar items matter, too, and should be sold with add-ons. As he summed it up: “Explaining how useful accessories are to any purchase in any category: that’s what separates a good retailer from a bad one. **MI**

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"I think most people think of cables as maybe not the place where they want to spend their money," said Aron Carr, a pro audio product specialist for Full Compass Systems in Madison, Wis. "But there is a dedicated group of people who believe that you get what you pay for."

"Customers will buy a \$60 cable if they hear the story, and they are excited about the benefits," McCann said.

ASTEROPE
PRO STAGE

HEADPHONES AND IN-EAR MONITORS

The headphone revolution continues, with a great variety of models and price points available. Sales staff should be on the watch for customers who express deep interest in audio quality, whether in a playback situation or in mixing.

"In professional earbuds, there are some really high-end models coming out now for about \$1,000," Carr said. "And it has surprised us, but we have been selling through those."

BAGS AND CASES

These products should be considered (and offered) with almost any sale. "There are so many specialty companies nowadays," Faltin said — and therefore something for every taste.

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ADD IT UP: PRODUCT CATEGORIES FOR SALES STAFF TO KEEP IN MIND, EVERY DAY.

PEDALS

Guitarists always need one more — and certainly they need to hear about the latest thing. “We do a fair amount of effects pedals,” Carr said.

Duncan pointed out the popularity of specialized equipment like the versatile Eventide H9. “That’s at \$499,” he noted. “It can be used for guitars and keyboards, and in studios as an audio effect on vocals or the master track.”



EVENTIDE H9

MOBILE RECORDERS

This strong category continues to grow, and dealers should be ready to sell them to almost any customer segment. Working bands can use them to record rehearsals and gigs. Singers can use them at recitals. Teachers and professionals can record auditions to consider later.



ZOOM H6

STRAPS

There are a great variety of straps out there, many in fine leather and other interesting materials. And as with cases, everyone needs one. “It’s an important thing as a brick-and-mortar retailer to impart upon the customer a visceral experience,” McCann said. “The feel of the leather. These kinds of things should tie in to the overall store experience.”



SOULDIER STRAPS

UNIVERSAL AUDIO APOLLO

ADAPTERS AND INTERFACES

The continuing proliferation of home studios has created opportunity for some retailers. “Everybody needs a thunderbolt adapter because of firewire interfaces,” Thompson said. “And people recording on iOS need the small interfaces that attach to those devices.”



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Incredibly authentic, studio quality acoustic guitar tone. Fastest, most accurate tracking available today. Electric to true acoustic guitar tone at the flick of a switch. Easy, plug and play installation with clean, hidden look.



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The gear ratio in each machine head is tuned to its string position so that every string responds the same to any tuning adjustment. One turn equals about one tone on every string. Faster tuning, retuning and open tunings. Simple genius.

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FROM THE TOP

TAKUYA NAKATA | YAMAHA

INTERVIEWED BY MICHAEL GALLANT

HOW DO YOU START YOUR DAY?

By drinking hot green tea and meditating: “What should I do today?” Since I was named president, it has been important for me to make the most of my morning, 20 to 30 minutes for myself, from when I arrive at the office until the workday begins.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN MUSIC?

I started to play guitar when I was in elementary school. I would play “Forbidden Games” and other pieces on classical guitar, and I became addicted to rock ‘n’ roll when I was in junior and senior high school. I walked the so-called “high road,” starting with Simon & Garfunkel and moving on to The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, and Deep Purple.

YOU SEEM TO HAVE AN AFFINITY FOR CLASSIC ROCK. IS THAT COMMON IN JAPAN? IS THE MYTHOLOGY THE SAME THERE AS IN THE U.S.?

The Beatles’ first visit to and performance in Japan became a phenomenon, and made such a great impact on Japan’s musical history. And now, generations of people who heard artists perform live in the 1960s have since retired, bought instruments, started taking lessons and resumed their band activities.

The Beatles, in particular, are widely loved even now, transcending any specific generation. In addition to this phenomenon, we had a folk music mythology dating back to the 1970s. Many legendary concerts have been held at the Yamaha Tsumagoi Resort, which has been called a Mecca for music.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST GET INVOLVED WITH MUSIC TECHNOLOGY? WERE YOU DRAWN MORE BY THE ART OR THE SCIENCE?

After enrolling in college, I became obsessed with music production, multi-track recording, and electronic synthesizers. Using two cassette decks, I would first imagine the final product. Then, I would dub sounds in succession, 10 or 20 times, so that by the end, what I had became completely different music than what I had started with.

That’s the secret — with a musical instrument, you can create only one musical part, but with multi-track recording and a synthesizer, you can create all the parts. So I challenged myself to create unique compositions by reimagining and editing classical music or a Zeppelin song, using only a synthesizer.

WHEN YOU WERE WORKING ON THE DX7 SYNTH, DID YOU HAVE ANY IDEA THAT IT WOULD BE SUCH A GAME-CHANGING INSTRUMENT?

In the second or third year after joining the company, I worked as a staff member explaining products at an X-Day event, where all

Yamaha digital products were displayed. At that time, I thought the DX7 was an innovative product, but honestly, I did not anticipate that it would be such a huge hit. I thought the synthesizer was a niche product. Personally speaking, I was using an analog synthesizer that required a certain amount of knowledge and technique, so I was preconditioned to think that not many people would play an instrument like that.

BUT IT TURNED INTO A HUGE PRODUCT.

I believe that the runaway success of the DX7 lay in the simple proposition that an amateur could produce a great sound through the simple touch of a button. Even if you couldn’t [program your own sounds], you could still use preset sound patches or download musical data available on the market to produce new music.

The sounds were very real, it had sixteen-note polyphony, and the price was low enough at 248,000 Yen, or \$1,995. Up until that time, synthesizers were primarily used by specialists, but the DX7 became a very user-friendly musical instrument that appealed to ordinary players.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM WORKING ON THE DX7 THAT HELPS YOU IN YOUR ROLE AS PRESIDENT TODAY?

I learned that when a product receives mixed reviews, we have a hit. [With the DX7] we received positive reviews such as “Marvelous!” and critical reviews saying, “What is this?!” — but this was what we had anticipated. We always focus on the target audience when producing a new product, so people outside that target can naturally start to criticize.

In the future, Yamaha plans to introduce products that satisfy customers in a target market and that therefore inspire mixed reviews. Subsequently, we will focus on customers who were previously outside that target to create other new products. The introduction of the DX7 got me started thinking this way.

WHAT DOES THE YAMAHA BRAND MEAN TO YOU, AND HOW DOES THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS DIVISION FIT IN WITH THE OVERALL GLOBAL BRAND?

Yamaha is an unprecedented and unique brand that has continued to generate new values by combining traditional acoustic technology with innovative digital and network technologies. It has become a brand highly praised by all fans of music around the world.

For a child of music such as myself, it was a brand to make your dreams come true, and this has not changed even now.

GIVEN THAT YAMAHA MAKES SO MANY DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS, HOW DO YOU PERSONALLY MAKE SURE



THE DETAILS

TAKUYA NAKATA

*President and Representative Director
Yamaha Corporation*

HQ: Hamamatsu, Japan

FOUNDED: 1887

EMPLOYEES: 19,688

BEST-SELLING PRODUCT: Digital Pianos

FUN FACT: Nakata joined Yamaha in 1981, and was directly responsible for the development of the immensely popular QY10 Music Sequencer.

THAT EVERY PRODUCT IS . . . WELL, MUSICAL?

I entrust our senior staff to create each individual product. Finding superior teams and trusting them with assignments is my job. Several times a year, I display our products in one place and validate a product's musicality with my own eyes and ears.

WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR?

For me, it's critical to know who the real customer is for any given instrument. If you truly understand this, and can fully assess the product from the customer's perspective, you will automatically see the pros and cons of that musical instrument.

SO YOUR EXPERIENCE AS A MUSICIAN IS HELPFUL.

As a big fan of music, I think I understand the feelings of customers. When I was engaged in product planning, my experience helped because I could think from their perspective — it was really useful when I was involved in the development of the Yamaha QY10 music sequencer, for example. Being a musician made me a stronger developer, since I could think, "What would I wish to have in this type of product?"

DOES THAT IMPACT YOUR MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY?

I believe that everyone in our company should do their job from the customers' perspective. By evaluating everything from this point of view, it becomes possible to speed up the management process. Every step of the way, we put an emphasis on effective communication and on maximizing output through teamwork.

WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN HIRING AN EMPLOYEE?

It may be surprising to some, but we feel that it is not required for an applicant to be well versed in music. We would like to employ those who are able to properly communicate with people from various countries, and are able to work creatively with both an awareness of and a desire to contribute to the progress of music culture.

WORD ON THE STREET IS THAT YOU PLAY A MEAN "BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY."

I gave a surprise solo guitar performance at an awards ceremony for senior sales representatives during the 2012 Winter NAMM show. Using only one classical guitar, I challenged myself to play all the parts of "Bohemian Rhapsody," including Freddie Mercury's vocals, the chorus, piano, guitar and bass.

VERY COOL. WHAT WAS THE MOTIVATION?

I felt compelled to do this because the employees at Yamaha Corp. of America had repeatedly asked me, "Would you play the guitar for us in the future?" At that time, I was president of YCA, and I brought my guitar into my office, which had transparent glass, and I enjoyed playing after five-o'clock. It seemed that our employees were moved by that, so I wanted to respond to their enthusiasm.

“Being a musician made me a stronger developer. I could think, ‘What would I wish to have in this product?’”

HOW'D IT GO?

It had been 20 years since I played in front of an audience. I was so nervous during my solo performance that my fingers tensed up and didn't want to move that day. More than 100 people were watching intently, so while my fingers did stop at some points throughout, I was determined to play to the last note, and pushed on. Afterwards, I said in my speech, "Don't give up halfway, even when it's difficult. This is what I believe." I managed to get through the performance, and was grateful to receive a warm round of applause.

ANY OTHER FAVORITE MUSICAL EXPERIENCES?

The best one was when I conducted a band performance during a culture festival at a senior high school in front of a packed gymnasium.

OUT OF ANY MUSICIANS OR BANDS, LIVING OR DEAD, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR DREAM GIG?

Playing with The Beatles. If I could play on the same stage with Paul McCartney, whom I've liked very much since I was a child, I would be on cloud nine. [Laughs.] The song I'd want to play with him would be "All My Loving."

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

I would be a carpenter because I like to create things. **MI**

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INSTRUMENTS OF CHANGE

The young people on these pages are members of a group that lives on a landfill in a slum in Paraguay and plays instruments made from the garbage they pull from it. And this is the story of what happened when one small retailer decided they could use some new instruments

BY MYRNA SISLEN

This week's issue of our local paper, *The Northwest Current*, circulation 48,000, has just come out, and there I am in a big picture on the front page, above the fold! I am holding one of my most treasured possessions, a violin constructed from trash found in a landfill. It was given to me by Favio Chavez, the conductor of the Orquesta Reciclado de Cateura, better known as the Landfill Harmonic. The amazing instrument, a piece of folk art that actually plays music, has been on prominent display in my store since I returned from Paraguay, this past May.

The story in *The Current* is mainly about the kids from the orchestra coming to Washington, D.C. to play at the Kennedy Center and visit my store, Middle C Music. It is hard to get one's head around the simple fact that they were in the United States, much less the fact that they performed in such a notable venue, or that we all went out for Mexican food.

But I am getting ahead of myself. The story of how it came about is what matters here.

This past spring, I made a trip to the capital of Paraguay to donate real musical instruments to kids who live in a landfill. The visit resulted in tremendous publicity, a huge increase in my store's visibility and a real business boost. But more importantly, it has shown me and others the power of what one small business and one person can do if she puts her mind to it.



Photos courtesy of
landfillharmonicmovie.com

POWERFUL LUNCH

You may not have heard of the Orquesta de Reciclado de Cateura. They are far better known by their nickname — the Landfill Harmonic — because that is the moniker that usually appears on their YouTube clips, which are well past 1 million views.

The orchestra is made up of children who live atop a landfill in Cateura, a neighborhood in Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay, and play on instruments constructed from objects found in the garbage. Cateura is not on any maps of Asuncion. There is no sewer system to speak of, and when it rains, many houses wash away. The people try to make a living by recycling the trash.

Although the YouTube video was well-known, and there had been many offers of help from all over the world, no one had actually done anything.

And somehow that's where I came into the story.

It all started on March 29, when I was having lunch with my friend, classical guitarist Berta Rojas. Berta is as famous in Paraguay as Beyonce is here. She had just been nominated for a Latin Grammy. And still she had been spending time in that slum, teaching lessons and recording songs with the orchestra.

She showed me one of their videos. Out of the muddy, trash-filled 21st century slum of Cateura came the sound of 18th century Vienna — Mozart, played on instruments literally made from trash.

“You know,” Berta said. “What they need are real instruments. If they could have just ten violins and three violas, that would be fantastic.”

TEN & THREE & ...

Ten violins and three violas. That doesn't sound like very

much. I thought, I can swing that.

I called The Music Link, an independent manufacturer and distributor located in San Francisco that I have done business with for many years. When I told them I needed the instruments for the Landfill Harmonic, they said, “OH MY GOD!!! WE SAW THAT VIDEO. OH MY GOD, THEY ARE AMAZING!!! WE ARE IN. HOW CAN WE HELP?!” I put their response in caps because that is how they sounded. I didn't want to ask them to donate the instruments; I just wanted to know their best price for me. The price they quoted was very fair. Done.

Or so I thought. The next day Berta emailed me and said, well,

hands of desperately poor children who live in a slum atop a landfill in the roughest neighborhood of the capital of Paraguay, well, you'd be right. The chances of their being stolen or otherwise disappearing are high.

Berta called Chris Istrati, the cultural attaché at the U.S. Embassy, to ask his advice and help. Chris is very nice and said that maybe I could ship them to the U.S. Embassy using the diplomatic pouch, or DPO. He looked into it, and said that he would be willing to receive the shipments, but that I should only send a few boxes at a time. They had to meet the strict size and weight requirements for DPO. That pretty much eliminated the

total I sent 18 boxes, including the three cellos and 12 guitars.

The Music Link packaged the instruments to comply with the diplomatic rules. I shipped them to Paraguay myself. It was starting to feel like the movie “Argo,” but in reverse. Instead of smuggling precious cargo out of a country, I was smuggling something in.

GO WHERE?

The other part of the plan was Berta's idea, and it took me a while to get on board. She wanted me to come to Asuncion and give the instruments to the kids personally.

Paraguay sits snugly between Brazil, Argentina and Bolivia. It is a very long way from Wash-



James Thessin (at center, in tie), U.S. Ambassador to Paraguay, attended the ceremonial delivery of the instruments. To his right are Myrna Sislen (in glasses) and Berta Rojas.

what they really need are violins, violas ... cellos, trumpets, flutes, clarinets, alto and tenor saxophones, one double bass and some percussion instruments.

I had come this far. Why stop now?

CLOAK & DAGGER

If you thought it might be challenging to get several dozen new musical instruments into the

double bass, and maybe the cellos too.

I knew I was getting carried away, but as the details started becoming more clear, I started adding instruments. I dipped into the stock of new instruments in my rental pool and sent more trumpets, flutes, clarinets, and although they didn't ask for trombones, I was sure they could use them, so I sent them too. In

ington, D.C., and quite honestly a long way outside my comfort zone. But the momentum was hard to resist, and on the evening of May 8 I found myself being whisked through customs in Asuncion.

There was a donation ceremony scheduled for the next day at 4 p.m. in Cateura. Government officials in Asuncion had wanted the donation ceremony

to be in a theater in the center of town, but having it in Cateura turned out to be much better. I would not understand the significance of the decision until I actually got to Cateura.

Traveling to Cateura is like traveling back in time, to a place that was never meant for people to live. The dirt streets are filled with enormous potholes, which generally are filled with water. “You will know you are here when you see the horse drawn wagons,” Berta told me, as we approached. “That is how they take the trash to the landfill.” Sure enough, we turned onto a dirt road and there they were — one young man standing behind a gaunt horse, reins in his hands, and another young man in the wagon securing a load of garbage.

After what seemed like hours of traveling through twisting narrow streets, we finally reached the building where the donation ceremony was to take place. It was a structure open on three sides with a concrete floor and rooms above that I later found out were classrooms. As we pulled up we could see security cars and men in black suits. They were there for the American Ambassador, James Thessin.

I walked into the shelter and the first thing I saw were ALL the instruments I had shipped. I mean everything. I couldn't believe it. Chris Istrati had told me some of the instruments had arrived. He had said not to worry — that there were enough to make a good showing. But there they were. The cellos and the guitars, along with all the trumpets, trombones, flutes, violins, violas, cellos, clarinets, alto and tenor saxophones, and a double bass that I had purchased that morning from a local store. Everything actually made it in one piece.

Berta had told me I would be asked to say a few words and that the ceremony would be formal. I had practiced saying “hello, my friends” in Guarani, a native Paraguayan language that is very difficult. (I had originally hoped to be able to say how happy I was to be there, but even that got shortened.) And now, seeing the new instruments in that desolate place, I started to cry, and thought, damn, I am not going to be able to talk at all. Every time I looked at that pile of instruments I started to cry again. It was really overwhelming.



There wasn't much time to dwell on things, though. Suddenly I was surrounded by the press, wanting interviews and taking pictures. It turns out that every major Paraguayan newspaper was there as well as Reuters and a film crew from the CBS show “60 Minutes,” who were, coincidentally, there to film a segment on the orchestra. It was a whirl of excitement and cameras.

First to speak was Favio Chavez, the director and conductor of the orchestra. He welcomed everyone and introduced Ambassador Thessin. His presence alone was a very big deal. Cateura is a section of Asuncion that the Paraguayan government would like to ignore. The streets aren't even on the map of the city. The mayor and minister of culture had said they would come, but they didn't show up.

Ambassador Thessin spoke very eloquently about how Favio Chavez had brought music and hope to Cateura with the lessons for the children, and how they had turned trash into gold with the beautiful instruments. He spoke about my coming from the U.S. to donate all the instruments, and noted that the children would keep playing the recycled instruments, while improving their technique on the donated instruments.

And then it was my turn.

Berta told me I should be very formal for the occasion, but everyone else had been so serious that I decided to be lighter and funny. My translator did an excellent job

and the kids laughed and I felt very good. At least I didn't cry. Berta spoke last and was inspirational, as always.

After the ceremony, the kids opened all the cases and assembled the tenor and alto saxophones, and held the cellos and double bass. One young man opened a trumpet case and I could see him comparing the new trumpet with the recycled one he was holding. He picked it up and played a few notes. He looked very happy.

And that was just on one side of the podium. On the other side were the violins and violas. All the children had big smiles on their faces, and of course, so did I. Soon they took out their original recycled instruments and started to play — “New York, New York,” as it happens, and I thought, why not? Why wouldn't the Orquesta de Reciclado de Cateura be playing an urbane Sinatra standby? Everything else had already seemed so surreal.

THE RETURN TRIPS

I went back to Cateura twice more.

Two days after the ceremony, I visited the school where the children practice. The school is made up of single classrooms surrounding an open courtyard. Each group rehearses separately around the courtyard. As we entered the courtyard I couldn't believe my eyes. The kids were already playing the new instruments!

I spoke with one of the cello players, Victor Caceros, who turned out to be one of the young teachers, and he thanked me profusely. Three days before, he had been playing a cello made from a metal can, with a hairbrush handle as one of the tuners. Now he sat down with a real cello, which he had set up, and started playing one of my favorite Bach Preludes.

There was a group playing in the courtyard with my six new guitars in the mix. There were violin classes for kids of all ages, all of them rapt with attention. A trio of sax players was reading through the Pachelbel “Canon” — until they were joined by a girl playing alto sax, and all four started rehearsing: the chorus of “New York, New York.”

“60 Minutes” was there, too, filming everything. They interviewed me, but I will be surprised if I make it to the final show. And then “60 Minutes” correspondent Bob Simon

INSTRUMENTS OF CHANGE

arrived. He had just gotten off the plane and when he walked into the courtyard I introduced myself and he said, "I have been to 130 countries, but this is my first time in Paraguay." I said, "Me, too."

IN THE KIT BAG

Everyone was very happy except for Estaban Irrazabal. Everyone had gotten a new instrument except him. The drum he was playing had a drumhead made from discarded X-rays duck-taped together. As with all the other recycled instruments, it was a beautiful work of folk art, but seriously lacking in musical potential. All Estaban had ever wanted was a drum set. I told him I would do what I could.

Berta called a friend who owns a music store in Asuncion called Zeppelin Music. I ended up spending three times more than I intended on a beautiful new Mapex Voyager drum set. The next afternoon, we returned to Cateura, my third trip. It had been raining all day, which would make the journey even more difficult, but I had Estaban's drum set, and I couldn't miss the chance to see his face when he saw them.

In the streets the water was already up to the SUV's wheels, but we reached the shelter where the ceremony had been held, and got the drums safely up the stairs to a classroom. The orchestra was scheduled to rehearse there later.

We set the drums up. Af-

ter about 20 minutes Estaban walked in the room. He took one look and covered his face with his hands and began to cry. I started to cry, too.

As he approached the drums, still with his hands over his face, and tears falling down his cheeks, he said, "I can't believe it." He said he had dreamed of a drum set like this all his life, but never thought he would ever have one. It was a moment so filled with emotion, with Estaban thanking me and me thanking him, that it was almost a relief when he sat down and started to play.

Afterward, I asked him how old he is and he told me 15. I thought, wonderful, the perfect age to be able to really start to play drum set. Favio then came

over and pointed out that many other children would benefit from the set too, and for many years to come. It was well worth risking the flooding streets for that moment.

I must say that of all the things I did during that week, going to Cateura for the third time, in the pouring rain, was the most fulfilling.

BOTTOM LINE

On August 27, the orchestra came to Washington, D.C. They performed at the Inter American Development Bank at noon, and at the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage at 6 p.m. After the performances, Middle C Music hosted a reception and dinner for them at the store. The kids loved the store. They shopped,

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they looked at everything and played all the instruments. I gave them ridiculous discounts. It was beautiful.

Ask anyone who knows me: I am a serious businessperson. I need to make money, and I need to make it every day. Somehow I got swept up in the story of the orchestra, and what I could do to help, without thinking of cost or tax implications or really anything. But there have been many benefits to my business as a result of this.

The press alone has been amazing. In addition to all the coverage in Paraguay, there was a TV piece on our Fox affiliate before I left, then a first newspaper article about the trip in *The Northwest Current* when I returned.

When the orchestra visited Washington there was a wonderful article in *The Washington Post*, another TV piece on our CBS affiliate and finally the front page piece. It's impossible to put a value on all that coverage, but I can tell you that business has never been better.

The numbers of new customers mentioning the articles and TV appearances are increasing daily and are reflected in increased sales and more students. Only yesterday, a mother came in and said that her three children were so thrilled to meet the orchestra members when they visited Middle C, that she has signed all three up for lessons.

Another father came in and said that after reading *The Washington Post* article, he decided to come to us to buy his son an electric guitar pack, and then while in the store purchasing the starter pack, he also signed his son up for guitar lessons.

It is as if new and old customers alike are feeling that they are part of something very special and that is exactly what I was hoping for. The "60 Minutes" piece is scheduled to air in November.

ANOTHER GIFT

At one point during the trip, Favio, the orchestra director approached me with a wrapped package. When I opened it, I couldn't believe my eyes. He had given me one of the recycled violins. I have to admit that I really wanted one of those instruments, but I never thought one

would come into my possession. It is an extraordinary piece of folk art.

The first thing I did when I got back to Middle C was prominently display the violin. Our spring recital season had begun and that Friday, before the performance, I told all the parents about my experience in Cateura. After all, without their patronage I wouldn't have been able to afford to

donate all the instruments, so actually they were part of the experience, and I really wanted to share it with them. I was able to tell the whole story without getting too emotional, until I described to them how offers of help had come from all over the world, but no one had done anything.

No one except one small independent brick-and-mortar store. **MI**

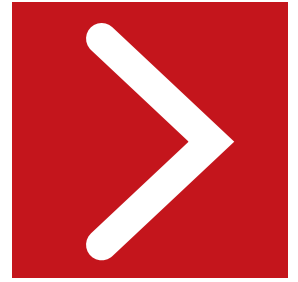
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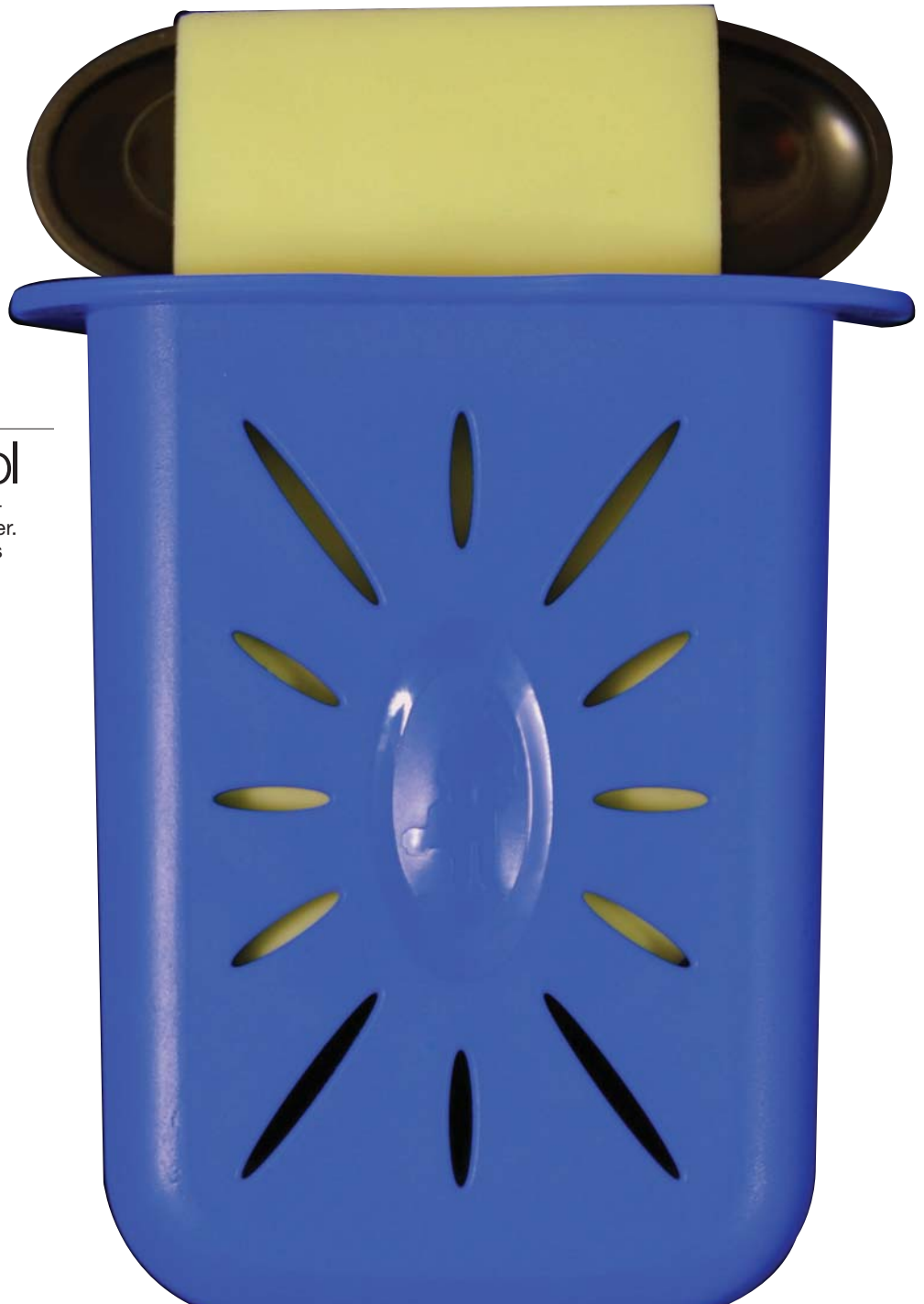


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Humidity Control

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GRETSCH | ROOT COLLECTION

Back to its Roots

Gretsch has expanded its Roots Collection with the addition of three new models, two banjos and one mandolin. The G9311 New Yorker “Supreme” A/E Mandolin (pictured) features a Fishman M300 Nashville piezo-ceramic pickup. The new G9420 Broadkaster “Supreme” boasts a three-ply solid maple rim, and the G9451 “Dixie Deluxe” 5-String Open Back Banjo includes a Whyte Laydie tone ring. gretschguitars.com

FENDER | NEW ADDITIONS

A Few Additions

Fender has added one ukulele and two new acoustic guitars to its collection, the Jimmy Stafford Nohea Ukulele, Sonoran SCE Wildwood IV, and Kingman Jumbo SCE Limited Edition (pictured). The Sonoran SCE Wildwood IV dreadnought features a solid spruce top for balanced tone, while the Kingman Jumbo SCE Limited Edition includes a natural body finish and maple Strat neck with “C”-shaped profile. fender.com

Ovation | PROTO LIMITED LT-60

Limited Supply

Ovation has unveiled the Proto Limited LT-60 acoustic, a limited-run U.S.-made model with an Adirondack spruce top on a deep-contour Lyrachord body. The LT-60 features a modern, angled take on the classic carved headstock shape, and is capped with a newly-designed Ovation “O” logo. The “O” logo also appears as the shape of the LT-60’s center sound hole. MSRP: \$5,199. ovationguitars.com



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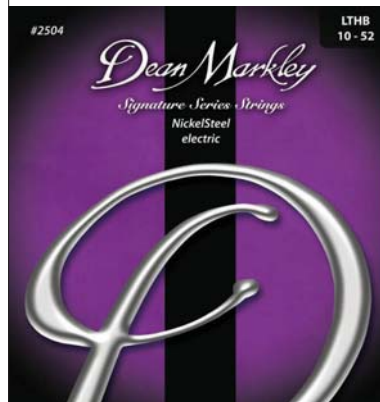
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GEAR >

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DEAN MARKLEY | SIGNATURE SERIES

Signature Strings

Dean Markley recently released its Signature series strings. The series utilizes a nickel-plated steel, slowly wound over a hex core with a unique core-to-wrap ratio. The new series is available in an assortment of gauge sets including Extra Light 8's, detuned 13's and seven string. MSRP: \$10.99.

{deanmarkley.com}



VHT | MELO-VERB

Mellow Out

The VHT Melo-Verb is a pedal recreation of the fabled tremolo and reverb effects that were first introduced as built-in amplifier features in the 1960s. The two effects sections are completely independent, with separate true-bypass switching. The all-analog tremolo section features classic speed and intensity controls, and for additional flexibility, it also has modern shape and level controls. The Reverb section replicates the classic built-in tube-driven spring reverb tone, and includes tone and mix controls.

MAP: \$119.99. {vhtamp.com}



KORG | PANDORA STOMP

Stompa Your Feet

Korg's Pandora series now includes the Pandora Stomp, which offers the same effects found in other Pandora products, but housed in a stomp box style pedal. Featuring a die-cast body the size of a compact effect unit, Pandora Stomp is a multi-effect unit that contains 158 types of modeling effects (seven simultaneous). Two hundred preset programs include many well-known, signature sounds, as well as 100 rhythm patterns that cover a diverse range of styles. MAP: \$129.99. {korg.com}

HUGHES & KETTNER | GRANDMEISTER

Grand Master

Hughes & Kettner has unveiled the GrandMeister. A fully analog tube amp, the GrandMeister still delivers a full set of TubeMeister features, including Red Box DI output and power soak, however, the addition of reverb, tap delay, flange, phase, tremolo and chorus along with full programmability of the four valve channels make it the ideal amplifier for stage or studio. MSRP: \$1,499.

{hughes-and-kettner.com}



ULTRASOUND | CP100

Ultra Acoustics

Ultrasound Amplifiers today introduces the Ultrasound CP100 acoustic amplifier. The amp features two channels: one to accommodate a mic or instrument input with separate volume, bass and treble with a second designed to amplify fiddles, mandolins, guitars and any other acoustic instrument. It comes equipped with a single, custom made 8-inch coaxial speaker, a tweeter, 100 watts of power and built in digital effects. MSRP: \$799.99. {ultrasoundamps.com}



SHS AUDIO | SPMA-1060

Real-World Applications

SHS Audio has released the SPMA-1060, a 10-channel, 600-watt powered mixer. The new tilt-back cabinet design adds a level of usability and functionality in real-world applications. shsint.net



VIDEO MOUNT PRODUCTS |

ERWEN-12E

Rack it Up

Video Mount Products has launched the new ERWEN-12E 19-inch wall rack enclosure. The unit works with all standard 19-inch rack equipment and accessories. It features 12 rack spaces, rails threaded with standard 10-32 threading, adjustable front and rear rails, and a vented top and bottom. videomount.com



MACKIE | VLZ4

Mackie Mixes It

Mackie's new VLZ4 line of analog compact mixers now include Mackie's Onyx preamps and deliver the ultimate in high-headroom, low-noise analog mixer design. The eight new VLZ4 mixers directly replace the previous VLZ3 generation models. The VLZ4 also features custom op-amps and negative summing bus architecture. mackie.com

GEMINI | PLAY2GO

Portable Playability

Gemini's new PLAY2GO portable P.A. system and MP3 player is ideal for small events and venues. Roll the PLAY2GO in on its two wheels by the retractable handle, flip the on switch and it will run off its rechargeable battery for over 12 hours. Tracks can be played from a mobile phone or any bluetooth-enabled device. MAP: \$199.95. geminisound.com





WESTONE | UM PRO SERIES

Professional 'Phones

Westone has debuted the UM Pro series of headphones for professional musicians. The UM Pro series 10, 20 and 30 are ideal for stage or studio. Each unit is individually hand-crafted in Colorado Springs, Colo. westone.com



RADIAL ENGINEERING | SW8

Sweet SW8

Radial Engineering has updated the SW8 backing track switcher. New features include a standby function that enables the technician to stop the show in between songs when the artist chooses to speak to the audience. radialeng.com

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KORG | KR MINI RHYTHM MACHINE

Feel the Beat

Korg's new KR Mini Rhythm Machine is designed for guitarists, bassists, pianists or any musician looking for easy rhythm accompaniment. It features a simple design focused on easy, push-button control. The KR Mini is also lightweight, can run on batteries and has a built-in speaker, letting it provide a backing rhythm pattern anywhere at any time. korg.com

LP | ASPIRE SERIES

Jamjuree Jamboree

Latin Percussion has added a 12.5-inch diameter djembe to its Aspire series. Jamjuree wood boasts a deep, rich grain that is accented with a satin finish. lpmusic.com



TAMA | SILVERSTAR

Super Star

Tama's Silverstar series has expanded with two new configurations. The VK82BD Limited Edition Eight Piece Double Bass kit (pictured) is ideal for metal and hard rock drummers, and features 8-, 10-, 12-, 14- and 16-inch toms. The VK54ZGR Power Rock Limited Edition Kit features a 6.5- by 14-inch snare; 13-, 16- and 18-inch traditional-sized toms, and a 24-inch kick. tama.com



"The Audix D6

is in a class by itself!"

Derek Lewis - VP Production for Centric TV - BET Network

"Sometimes I have up to 5 drummers on stage playing at the same time. With the D6, I can get the sonic character of each kick drum, giving me the control I need. With other mics, I normally have to use EQ, but with the Audix D6, this is not an issue. Simply put, the D6 is the one mic that every studio or live engineer needs to have."

**Chris Denogean - Chief Engineer,
The Drum Channel**

"The D6 works perfectly whether the kick has a full head, ported head, or no head with a pillow inside. The D6 gives me just the right amount of bass tone combined with just the right amount of attack, all without EQ."

**Gino Banks - Bollywood session drummer, music
arranger and studio owner**

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**George Petersen - Editor,
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"The best kick drum mic I've ever used. Replaced my kick drum mic I'd been using for 15 years!"

**Paul Rogers - Front of House,
George Strait**

"With the D6 and the Randall May internal miking system, my kick drum sounds the way it should sound, with no weird dips or spikes. It sounds just right to me!"

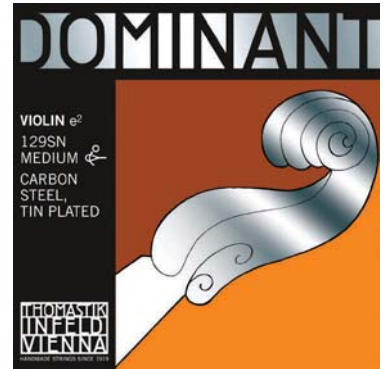
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THOMASTIK-INFELD | DOMINANT E STRINGS

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Thomastik-Infeld's new Dominant tin plated E strings are round, full-bodied strings that offer quick bow response, high dynamic range and resistance to whistling. Due to significantly less string noise in higher positions, the new additions are ideal for those playing in intimate chamber settings or solo performances. The materials and manufacturing process make them durable and easy to play. thomastik-infeld.com



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KNILLING | #7KF ARTIST

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ADD-ON SPOTLIGHT



VANDOREN | MJO LITE

Lite & Bright

Vandoren has expanded its MJO line of ligatures with the new MJO LITE for B-flat clarinet. The MJO LITE is made out of a synthetic material and offers the quick response and resonance of the standard line of MJO inverted ligatures at a lower price point. Due to its flexibility and durability, the unit is ideal for younger players. dansr.com

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KORG | LIMITED EDITION COLORS

Rainbow Keys

Korg is offering a run of keyboards in limited edition colors, including the MicroKorg and the 61-key Krome Music Workstation. The MicroKorg synth/vocoder is available in a limited-edition gold finish. The 61-key version of the Krome Music Workstation is available in red, blue and gold. korg.com



HAMMOND | LESLIE 122XBSE

Modern Design

Hammond's new Leslie 122xbSE model features a modern cabinet design and finish to match Hammond's MiniB, XK Vintage and XK Traditional Console Organs. This all-tube Leslie is hand-built in the United States. hammondorganco.com



KAWAI | GX BLAK

Black Magic

Kawai has debuted the GX BLAK series, the company's first new line of grand pianos in 18 years. The series is a collection of six grand piano models offering one consistent level of professional quality. All models include the exclusive Millennium III Action featuring components made of ABS-Carbon, a composite material created by the infusion of advanced carbon fiber into Kawai's renowned ABS Styran. kawaius.com



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HAL LEONARD | 'POP PIANO HITS'

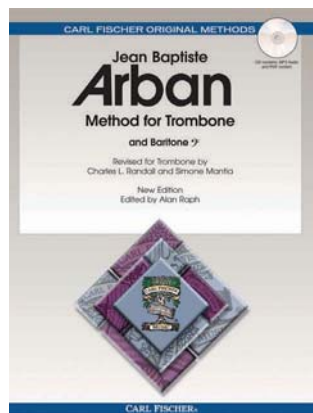
Hal Hits Top 40

Hal Leonard has released the latest book in the *Pop Piano Hits* series. This title lets students of all ages play songs, such as “Blurred Lines,” “Cruise,” “Brave,” and “Cups (When I’m Gone).” halleonard.com

CARL FISCHER | 'ARBAN'

Modern Edition

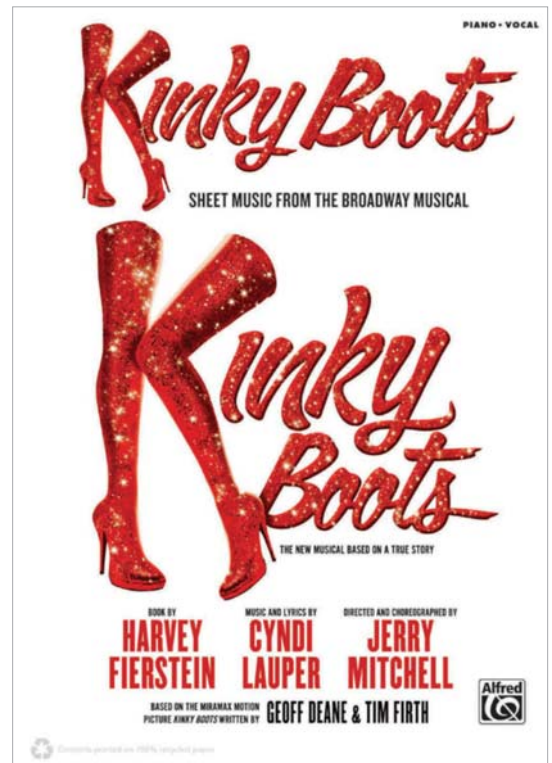
Carl Fischer’s newly engraved edition of *Arban’s Method for Trombone* has been edited and expanded and brings the trombone revision of Arban into the 21st century by enhancing and expanding the complete Arban text. It also addresses new skills and techniques developed up to current times — the first re-engraving since 1936. The edition also includes printable PDFs of the piano parts. carlfischer.com



ALFRED | MUSICAL SONGBOOKS

Broadway Stars

Alfred Music has released two songbooks from the musicals “Kinky Boots” and “Pippin.” *Kinky Boots: Sheet Music* is a colorful, 164-page souvenir songbook containing sheet music for every song written by Cyndi Lauper. *Pippin: Sheet Music* is an updated, newly-engraved songbook that was produced in direct consultation with Stephen Schwartz to coincide with the 2013 Broadway revival. The book contains 13 songs. alfred.com



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GEMINI | G4V

Four the Record

Gemini's new G4V is a USB controller and audio interface with built in four-channel mixer. Within its fully metal enclosure, the G4V provides two full-featured physical DJ decks and touch-sensitive jog wheels. MAP: \$299.95. geminisound.com



ADD-ON SPOTLIGHT

DURATRUSS | CRANK STAND

Crank it Up

The new DuraTruss Goliath-Studio crank stands feature a direct drive, rack and pinion design in place of the cable found on old traditional stands. This innovation lets the new DuraTruss Goliath-Studio Stands offer greater lifting power and a lighter weight along with fewer maintenance issues. duratruss.com



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AMERICAN DJ | MEGA GO, JELLY GO

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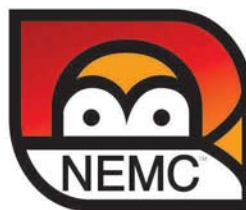
PIONEER | DDJ-WEGO2

Here We Go

Pioneer Electronics has launched the DDJ-WeGO2, an ultra-compact DJ controller that makes it easy to learn DJing essentials by providing users with a simple means of creating mixes with their own music collections. The DDJ-WeGO2 features Jog FX and multi-color LED illumination, and is available in white, black and red. MSRP: \$429. pioneerdj.com



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>>>
Matt Hatfield
Parkway Music
Clifton Park, N.Y.

We go to great lengths to make sure every repair is done well. Particularly in electronics, after a repair we do a burn-in test and really try to work the piece of gear hard to make sure it's going to show up on the gig.

We have two full-time electronics technicians, one luthier and three guitar repair techs. Three are dedicated to repairs only, and the other three sell as well. When it's slower on the floor they're doing repair work, but when it's busy they can be selling too. So it's nice to bill their time to a couple different avenues as needed. And they are very effective salespeople because they're repair people as well. There's this confidence from them that the customer gets from speaking to someone who really knows how a guitar works.

Sometimes it's hard to remember — you're not going to get rich doing repair work. But it's very important because every job is your reputation. Don't do it if you're not going to do a great job because it's your calling card out there.

>>>
Pete Biedron
Bandsource
Downers Grove, Ill.

One of the ways we market the repair department is when we work with schools we're pretty proactive in getting our nametag on all the instruments we repair. So when a kid gets issued his school instrument, he immediately sees our image and branding on that tag that says Bandsource. It helps to reinforce our brand and image within certain school districts we work closely with.



>>>
Pete Ellman
Ellman's Music Center
Naperville, Ill.

How do you profit in the repair department?

It's very difficult to profit in the repair department. But we've found first of all you have to have someone running it who's very, very good at what they do. You don't want just a repairman, but someone who understands the sales side of our business and someone who understands that the repair shop is part of our sales force.

When they come out of repair school, they're just thinking, "Oh, I'm going to fix instruments." But it's nice to have them understand that we can get a lot of add-on sales if they make recommendations. If a mouthpiece is really grody they can say, "You should replace this

mouthpiece." They can make recommendations that can cause people to purchase things they may not normally.

We would never try to upsell them something they wouldn't need, because we don't want our customers to feel like they can't trust us. But if we see something they can use we'll recommend it. For example, [recommending a new] case. If you put an instrument that has just been fixed up into a case that's in real bad shape, they're going to be back to see us again real soon to have it fixed.

Something else that helps a lot is selling service agreements. Ours covers any playing condition

repairs including ultrasonic cleaning for brass instruments and general playing conditions for woodwinds — customers can bring it in twice a year for that. So anything that would affect playing condition is free throughout the term of the service agreement.

We have three full-time employees. During the summer when we get a bunch of school returns in we always add two to three interns or high school kids, as well.

To promote the department, we have a Facebook page for our instrument repair and it's on our website. We also put flyers into every instrument that goes out.

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MFB \$59.99

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Pitch Bend and Modulation ribbons

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