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ALFRED MUSIC'S CEO ON
RUNNING A FAMILY
BUSINESS

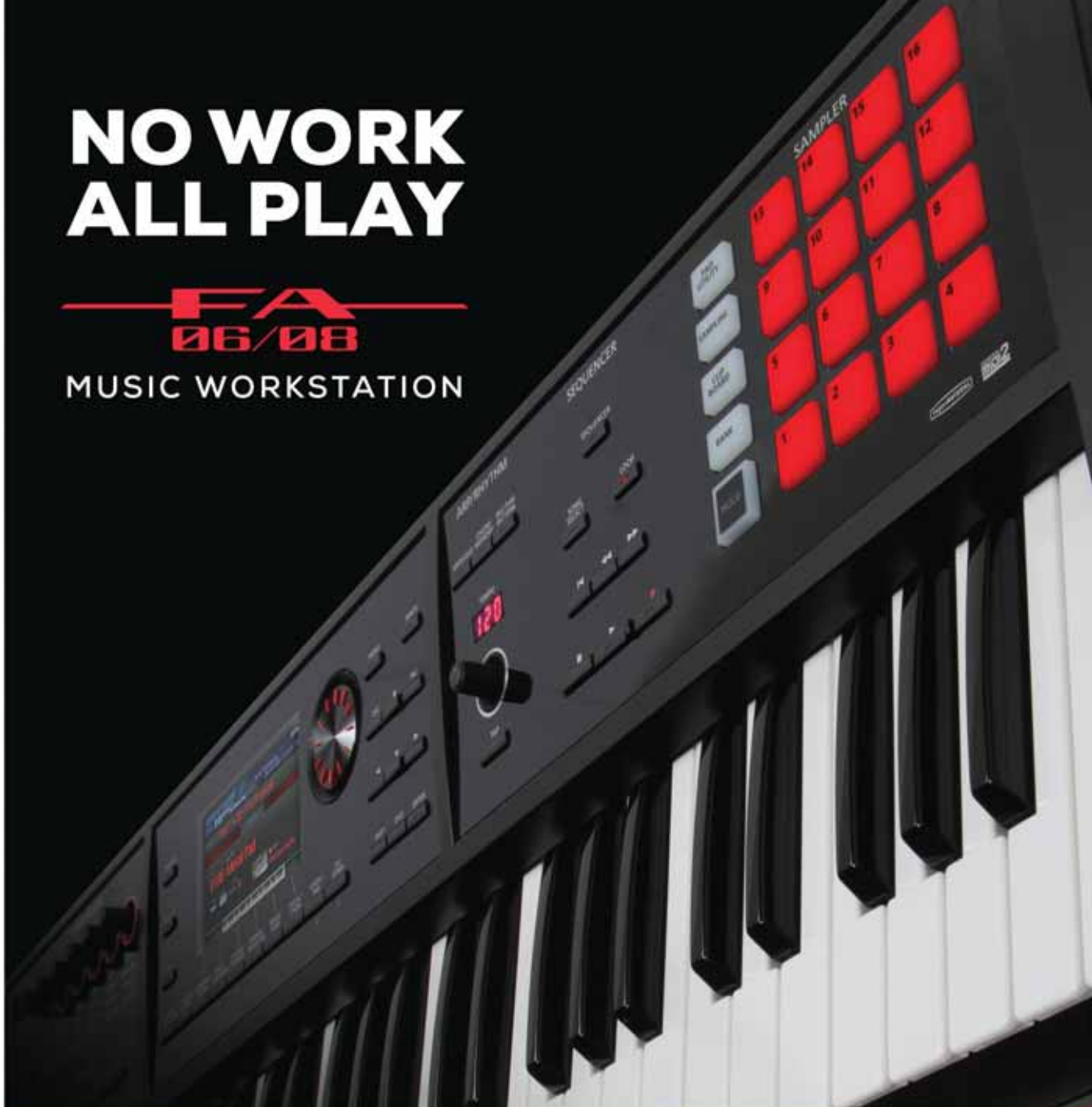
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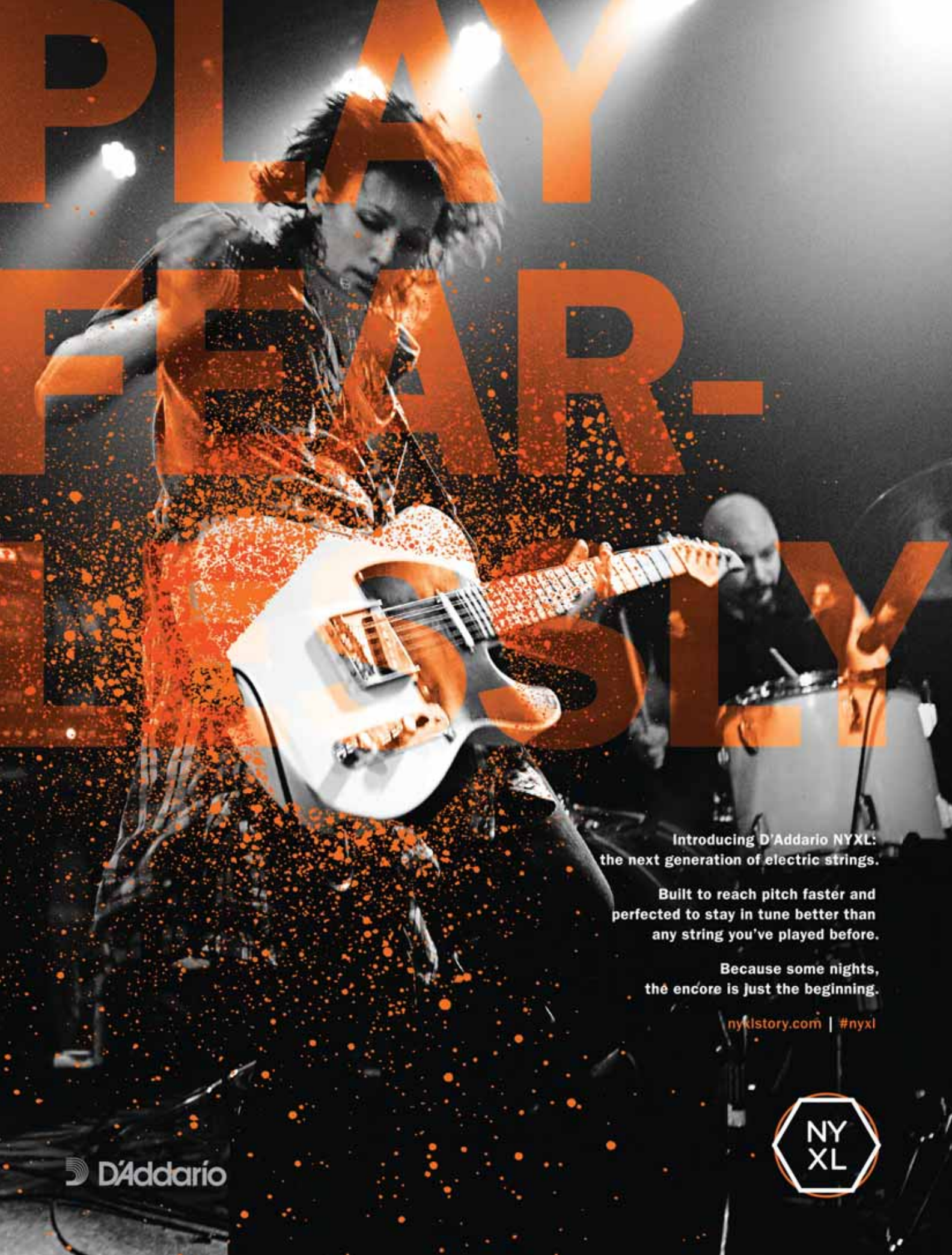
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Candyman's Cindy and Rand Cook



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Greg Billings



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PERSPECTIVE | BY KATIE KAILUS

RED CARPET SERVICE

A few weeks ago I traveled to Santa Fe, N.M., to visit Candyman Strings & Things for this month's cover story (see page 36). When I first stepped inside the full-line dealer, two things stood out: the bright rustic feel of its expansive showroom and the warm welcome from everyone across the store — starting with David greeting me at the door to Peter teaching lessons to the owners Rand and Cindy Cook. I was treated as if I wasn't showing up at the busiest time of the day to grab three hours of the owners' time. Instead, they rolled out the red carpet — complete with a stop at their favorite restaurant.

Truth be told, however, they don't just roll out the red carpet for managing editors of industry trade publications. They roll it out for everyone that walks through their door. Everyone.

In today's technology-driven age, there's something to be said about a store that has engaged, focused employees who aren't buried in their cellphones or computers. First impressions are everything. I've walked into a lot of music stores in my tenure and the best stores always have staffers who are smiling, welcoming and ready to help out — not a store who's employees are glued a computer screen behind the sales counter.

In this month's column, "The Just-Hired Hump" (page 30), columnist Gerson Rosenbloom discusses how busy small business owners need to make time

to properly train new hires. His advice includes assigning veteran staff members specific topics to teach throughout the day. What do I suggest they teach first? To put the cellphone away, get out from behind the sales counter and start interacting with their customers.

The owners at Candyman Strings & Things have created a comfortable atmosphere for their employees that, as they say, "is not made up of the buy low, sell high, numbers-driven folks." Instead, they have found people that are driven by creating interpersonal relationships — and that makes for happy customers as well as happy employees.

"Doing good things for good people for good reasons is what they allow me to do here," said Sam Atkinson, customer service manager. "A lot of us don't consider this a job. Not one of us hates coming to work — we all love working here."

So, get your employees to put down their cellphones, get out from behind the sales counter and create relationships with your customers. Roll out that red carpet. **MI**



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LETTERS

Five Years Down

Thanks so much to the editors of *Music Inc.* for featuring JamHub in your “From the Top” section in the May 2014 issue.

When we entered this business and launched the first JamHub products five years ago, we really never expected the enthusiastic reaction we received from the press, progressive retailers and musicians. We believe our products help people make music together, and to us, that’s the best way, whether it’s at rehearsal, at school or just really, really late at night.

Keep watching JamHub this summer as we roll out some very cool innovations that will take our company to some new and very exciting places.

Thanks for giving us the opportunity to tell a little bit of our story and say thank you to all of the amazing people in this industry who have contributed to our success, and to the new fans we’re working hard to attract every day. Five years down, at least a hundred more to go!

Steve Skillings
CEO
JamHub Corp.

Industry Inspired

I just wanted to express how honored Stephanie and I were to be featured in *Music Inc.’s* May issue. We are proud of the things we’re doing in our company. However, to give credit where it’s due, some of the best ideas for promotions we do today are thanks to our friends in the industry. We adapt these ideas to work for Ted Brown Music, and are equally pleased when our friends do the same with our ideas.

Being able to evolve and stay relevant to our customers and community keeps us strong. This is a factor that is especially



important today with so many changes happening in Washington state. We’ve seen good friends and competitors fail during these difficult times. We’re happy to be among the thriving survivors as 2014 shows promise of being a banner year.

Whitney Brown Grisaffi & Stephanie Brown Howe
President & Vice President
Ted Brown Music
Tacoma, Wash.

Alan Friedman's 'Love Letter'

Though I have read, enjoyed and learned a lot from Alan Friedman’s articles over the years, I am disappointed in the editorial choice to include his partisan love letter (“A Letter To President Obama on Obamacare,” May 2014) thus wasting valuable space in the last issue. (Almost 4 percent of last month’s issue.)

I’m confident Mr. Friedman has not read the ACA in its entirety. He may believe it passed with the best of intentions, but I am sure he understands the unintended consequences of legislation. I suspect he has strong feelings about how Sarbanes-Oxley and mark-to-market accounting affected the economy. Why does he believe the ACA will turn out any better?

Jeff Mazza
Royal Music
Toms River, N.J.

NASMD Reflection

We were particularly excited that attendance at the NASMD convention was up considerably from last year (and San Antonio was a really good convention!) In fact, attendance was 410 people and that’s the largest conference in over a

decade for our organization.

We were grateful for the nice turnout, but equally with the favorable comments about the educational sessions. Our VP, Rosi Johnson, and the board did a tremendous job putting that together and it was very well received.

The 2014 theme was “I2: Innovate & Invigorate.” Our keynote speakers included John Kao (an internationally recognized speaker known as “The Innovation Sherpa,”) Joe Lamond from NAMM and Tim Smithe, creative director for a high-end furniture retailer in Chicago. In addition, the Portofino Bay Resort venue, the weather, and the social events all were fantastic — we must thank our sponsors for their generous support! The NASMD Olympics were awesome and this year we added a bocce ball tournament and pool party.

Our number one goal for NASMD is to identify new members and encourage school music retailers (and suppliers) to join the organization and attend next year’s convention in New Orleans. Most members feel their businesses have benefitted greatly through participation. We look forward to the next generation of dealers, road reps, and managers to benefit from the “group knowledge” to help their businesses grow and prosper. Where else can you learn so much and have so much fun too!?

George Quinlan, Jr.
NASMD President
Quinlan & Fabish Music Co.

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Allan Greenberg on the latest acquisitions
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> **Sam Ash Music**

Pitches in to collect instruments
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Mixes up open mic night
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RETAIL

PIANOFORTE | BY KATHLEEN COSTANZA

THE PIANO HEADQUARTERS

When PianoForte Chicago owner Thomas Zoells discovered that the rent in Chicago's historic Fine Arts building, where his store had been for the last decade, was being more than doubled, he wasted no time. His team closed on a new spot in December, got a building permit in April and opened the new, more than twice-as-big PianoForte Chicago last October.

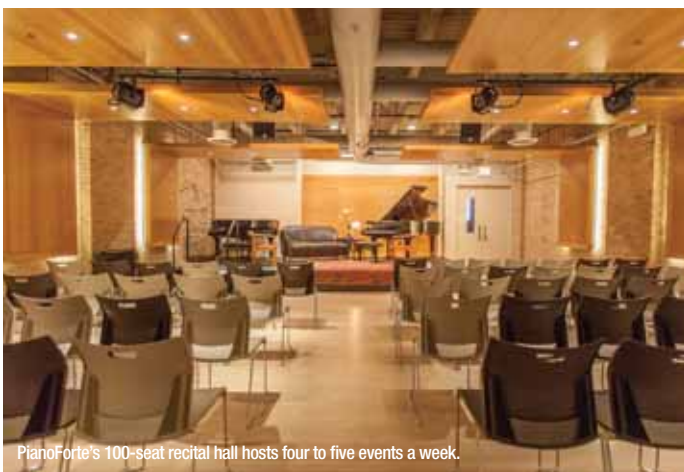
But the move wasn't driven by a larger showroom or more piano sales. The size of the showroom increased by zero square feet. Rather, Zoells transformed the new building into a three-story piano mecca filled with lesson rooms, a recording studio and a recital hall that seats 100.

It's also the headquarters of the PianoForte Foundation, a separate, non-profit Zoells founded nine years ago to promote piano music and its surrounding culture.

"I think people immediately realize that this is not a piano selling operation — this is a piano loving operation," Zoells said. Indeed, while PianoForte's 2,500-square foot showroom has everything from a 10-foot 2-inch \$200,000 Fazioli grand to a \$1,000 digital Yamaha, piano sales are only a chunk of the day-to-day happenings that have cemented PianoForte's pres-



Thomas Zoells and Steve Marcus



PianoForte's 100-seat recital hall hosts four to five events a week.

ence as Chicago's hub of piano activity.

SWITCHING IT UP

The thought process behind the move was very deliberate:

to diversify income from piano sales while keeping overhead low.

"The piano business is a very difficult business, and the best discipline in my opinion is to control your inventory by not

having a lot of space," Zoells said, adding it's tricky for piano lovers like himself to resist buying new, beautiful pianos.

Zoells, who was raised in Switzerland, started the business in 2004 on the eighth floor of the Fine Arts building with just four pianos and a desk. By growing slowly and cautiously throughout the recession, he's stayed committed to limited inventory and kept a streamlined staff of four. The showroom is filled with carefully selected pianos from manufacturers, including Schimmel, Grotrian, Kawai, Feurich and Mason & Hamlin. Plus, PianoForte is the Midwest's only dealer of the super high-end, Italian Fazioli pianos, of which only about 100 are built every year.

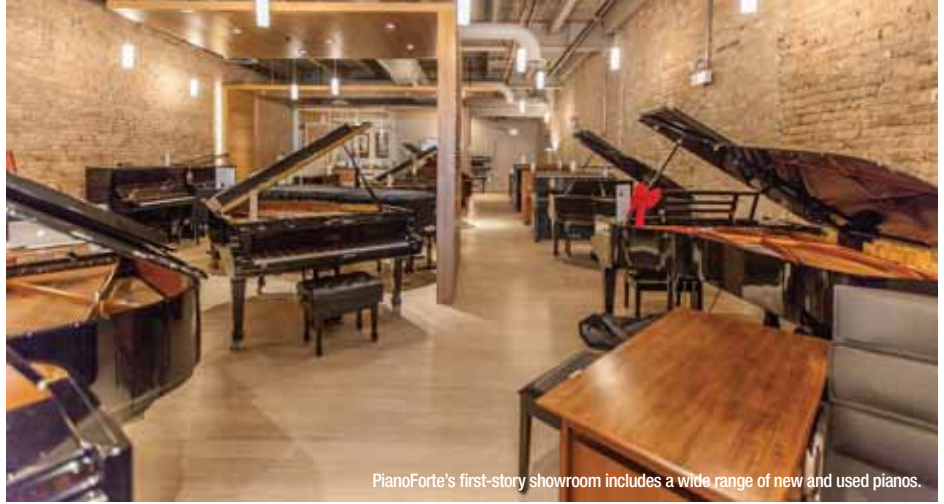
Beyond sales, the extra space has let PianoForte venture into various other activities. Its hall sees four to five events a week and is equipped for live broadcasting and high-quality video streaming. The rental of its recording studio is growing, too.

PIANO PLAN

In PianoForte's early years, when Zoells only sold Faziolis, he said the pianos sold themselves. People who were in the market knew where to go. But as he's diversified over time, he and Manager of Sales Steve Marcus kept a straightforward



The recording studio is equipped for live broadcasting.



PianoForte's first-story showroom includes a wide range of new and used pianos.

pricing approach.

“We have prices that are on the pianos that are simply what we have invested in the piano plus what we consider a reasonable margin to be in business,” Zoells said. “So the whole idea of a sale this week and not next week — it just doesn’t make sense and it kind of goes against my personal grain.”

TWO SIDES

For all the various income generators, an undeniable part of why the business has taken root as a major piano presence is the work of the PianoForte Foundation. Since founding it in 2005, Zoells said it’s taken on a life of its own with a 20-plus board of directors, paid staff and numerous volunteers (including Zoells).

PianoForte Foundation awards scholarships, donates pianos, throws affordable concerts and hosts monthly live broadcasts on Chicago’s classical and jazz stations.

In late May, the foundation is sponsoring the bi-annual Chicago Amateur Piano Competition for non-professional adult players, an event that draws a pool of international talent.

While PianoForte Chicago pays the mortgage and provides much of the infrastructure for the PianoForte Foundation to exist, the non-profit is its own fundraising entity. Still, the two sides have a symbiotic relationship that ends up being a boon for both customers and Chicago’s piano world.

“When customers walk through the door of the showroom and they hear piano music coming from somewhere from above, they ask questions,” Marcus said. “We get to tell them, ‘Well, we have lessons going on, we have recitals going on, we have recording going on.’ That impresses them as much or more than the instruments themselves and it immediately projects the whole mission of PianoForte.” **MI**

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MUSIC & ARTS | BY KATIE KAILUS

MUSIC & ARTS ACQUIRES 13 WASHINGTON MUSIC STORES

Music & Arts has acquired two music companies in Washington state, making it the largest music retailer and lesson provider in the state.

Mills Music locations in Bellevue, Bothell, Burien, Issaquah, Kent and Redmond, Wash., are now part of the Music & Arts family. This acquisition comes on the heels of the retailer acquiring seven Music Centers stores based in Tacoma, Wash., in February.

Music Inc.'s Katie Kailus exclusively spoke with Allan Greenberg, executive vice president of operations for Music & Arts regarding the recent acquisitions.

MI: What are Music & Arts thoughts on today's news of the acquisitions?

AG: We are very excited to have Mills Music join the Music & Arts family. It's been a busy few months for us, having added 13 stores in only 60 days through our acquisition of Mu-

sic Centers and Mills Music in Washington. We are thrilled to continue the legacy of top-notch customer service and look forward to working with educators, parents and students to foster a lifelong love of music.

MI: Why did you decide to take on these two companies?

AG: Both Music Centers and Mills Music were well-run companies, with a long history of servicing school music programs. We were able to acquire other infrastructure, such as distribution and repair centers, which will allow us to fully service the communities, not to mention the outstanding staff and ed reps who have longstanding relationships with the community and educators. All of these factors together made these companies a strategic and attractive addition for Music & Arts.

MI: How important is main-

taining relationships between the staff members of these stores and the customers?

AG: The relationships between store staff and customers are critical. Whether the customers are parents and students who have come to know our lessons teachers and in-store staff or teachers who work closely with our ed reps, we want to continue to nurture the relationships that have already been established. That's a big aspect of the whole acquisition process, to maintain as many relationships as we can.

MI: What does Music & Arts hope to get out of the acquisitions?

AG: As the largest band and orchestra instrument retailer and lessons provider in the country, we support school music programs all over the U.S. Our entrance into Washington better positions us to reach as many



Allan Greenberg

educators, students and parents as possible as we continue to promote the importance of music education.

MI: What does the future hold for Music & Arts?

AG: We are always exploring opportunities for acquisitions and organic growth and look forward to seeing what the future has in store. **MI**

Based in Frederick, Md., Music & Arts has 134 retail locations across 23 states.



OLD TOWN SCHOOL MUSIC STORE | WORKSHOP

Old Town School Music Store Teaches Instrument Care 101

After a brutally dry winter for guitars, Chicago's Old Town School Music Store hosted an Instrument Care and Feeding workshop on April 19. Sales associate Andrew Stefano explained the root causes of cracks and humidity damage and demoed several humidifiers.

The event was one of workshops the store, which is owned and operated by the Old Town School of Folk Music, holds regularly. Stefano said its workshops on

buying your first instrument, usually scheduled after the school's rental session finishes up, are especially educational and helpful sales drivers.

"I think the biggest barrier that music stores have is peoples' shyness to try things out," Stefano said. "On your first instrument, you may not know anything about it, so people don't want to pick up a guitar. I think what this really does is break down barriers for people."

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SAM ASH | PHILANTHROPY

WQXR, Sam Ash Collect Over 2,500 Instruments

Sam Ash Music lent nine stores around the New York region as drop-off locations for New York classical music radio station WQXR's 10-day instrument drive. The drive, which ended April 7, collected more than 2,500 instruments for under-resourced school music programs, far surpassing its original goal of 1,000.

The drive was a partnership between the station, Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation and Sam Ash Music. The company is also repairing and refurbishing the donated instruments at a reduced rate.

David Ash, CEO of Sam Ash Music, said the company had been working for years with Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation for years and it was a natural fit for the company to participate.

Along with crediting operations manager Eric Guido, David Ash said it was his late uncle, Paul Ash, who passed away last February, who kickstarted company's involvement.

"He really spearheaded it and made the arrangements to do it," David Ash said. The station and Sam Ash Music plan to do another drive next year.



STEVE WEISS MUSIC | IN MEMORIAM

Percussion Industry Leader Steve Weiss Passes Away

Steve Weiss, owner of Steve Weiss Music and a pioneer in the rare and specialized percussion industry, passed away on April 21. He was 71.

Weiss took his first drum lesson when he 10 years old and after school got a job with the Reading Railroad which let him travel the country and start collecting rare instruments. In the early 1960s, Weiss started renting out his percussion instruments to musicians, who soon started asking if they could buy from his collection. Eventually, Steve Weiss Music was born and grew into a renowned mail-order house for tough-to-find instruments, especially gongs. He was also a leader in e-commerce, successfully adapting his business to a highly effective website.

"The business community knows me because they grew up with me," Weiss told *Music Inc.* in September 2012. "Most of the people who are retiring now, I sold them their first mallet instrument or their first set of kettle drums. It's just word-of-mouth — that's how we do it."

BLACK CAT MUSIC | EVENT

ALL GRASSED UP PERFORMS AT BLACK CAT MUSIC

Bluegrass band All Grassed Up performed at Black Cat Music on April 26 as part of the Berkeley Springs, W.Va., store's free monthly concert series. Owner Adam Kary said he started hosting the concerts about a year ago to draw people into the store.

Through radio ads, Facebook promotion and flyers around the town, the free concerts typically draw a crowd of 70 people or more and have upped



the store's visibility in the town.

"It brings in people who wouldn't normally be here," said Kary. "It's not just musicians who come, it's music lovers. And that helps generate new customers."

Next up for the series?

"We're even considering having a heavy metal night."

GUITAR CENTER | NEWS

Ares Management Takes Control of GC

Guitar Center announced on April 3 that Ares Management LLC has taken a controlling stake in the company through a partial debt-to-equity exchange.

The new deal reduces Guitar Center's total debt by about \$500 million and cuts its annual cash interest expense by more than \$70 million.

Guitar Center's former owner, Bain Cap-

ital, kept partial ownership of the company and representation on the board. Bain Capital bought the retailer in 2007 for \$2.1 billion, borrowing \$1.56 billion in making the purchase. Along with the exchange, Guitar Center refinanced its remaining debt for a lower interest rate, giving it more flexibility and improved credit terms over the next five years.

"On a cash flow basis, we expect to save more than \$70 million a year in cash interest expense," said Tim Martin, Guitar Center's CFO, in a release. "In addition, the removal of the restrictive term loan covenant and extension of the maturity dates of our facilities provides us with financial flexibility to execute our strategic plan and to grow the business."



Local group Banana Phone performs at the originals only open mic night at Spicer's Music.

SPICER'S MUSIC | EVENT

Spicer's Music Shakes Up Open Mic Night

A crowd of over 80 came out for the "originals only" open mic night at Spicer's Music in Auburn, Ala., on April 18. A spin on the monthly open mic nights Spicer's Music has been hosting since it opened in 2012, the night saw an array of talent from youth, college students and adults who performed original acoustic, piano and full band acts and even brought home-made, pre-recorded backing tracks.

"We wanted to take it a step further

and push people — not pressure them — but push them to experiment, to get outside of their comfort zone musically and to challenge themselves," said co-owner Tim Spicer. Spicer said the store hosts live music events at least twice a week.

"I'm always surprised by the raw talent of the musicians in the Auburn/Opelika community," Spicer said. "I was even more surprised by the variety of original songs played, and the complexity of some of the pieces."

LIPHAM MUSIC | CLOSING

Lipham Music Closes After 59 Years

Lipham Music in Gainesville, Fla., where former Eagles guitarist Don Felder once gave guitar lessons to Tom Petty, has closed its doors after 59 years.

Owner Buster Lipham began working

at the store in the mid-1960s, which was then owned by his father, Val Lipham. The store moved to its current location in the mid-'70s.

The Gainesville Sun reported that through-

out its nearly 60 years, Lipham Music supplied instruments to legends including The Allman Brothers Band, Bo Diddley and Ray Charles and was a hub of music activity during the rise of the rock 'n' roll era.

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SUPPLY

HAILUN | BY KATHLEEN COSTANZA

GLOBAL SCALES

When Chinese piano manufacturer Hailun was getting ready to launch its brand under its own name in North America in 2006, there were a lot of big decisions to make. After all, the company was entering into an arena of competitors who boast centuries-long histories. But Basilio Strmec, president of Vienna International/Hailun USA, said there was one choice that has propelled the company's growth through today.

"We decided we didn't want to have dealers," Strmec said. "We didn't want to be a company that finds its purpose in selling product to the next channel or outlet. We wanted to have partners in the market."

Joe DeFio, senior vice president of Vienna International/Hailun USA, added that thinking of dealers as partners means he'll answer phone calls at 2 a.m., and he's even talked with retailers' customers on the phone a few times. Hailun offers weekly retail training sessions, a 90-day exchange policy, and a seven-day service policy for dealers.

Strmec credits both the pianos' quality and strong rela-



President of Vienna International/Hailun USA Basilio Strmec, fifth from left, and founder Hailun Chen, center, on the most recent dealer trip to China.

tionships with dealers as drivers in its expansion. In 2006, the company was producing about 3,500 units per year; today it produces 38,000 and sees about five to seven new dealer inquiries a month.

HISTORY LESSON

Hailun's history goes back far before it launched its own line, though.

The company was founded by Hailun Chen and his wife Faye in 1987 as a metal parts supplier for other Chinese and international piano manufacturers. The company did well and developed the skill to manufacture parts at exact specs. Then, in 1999, the company formed a partnership with Peter Veletzky, whose family had owned Austrian piano company Wendl & Lung since the

early 20th century. With Veletzky's scale designs and oversight, Hailun presented its first pianos under the Wendl & Lung brand name in 2003.

"This relationship with Peter Veletzky and the European genetic makeup in the pianos really became an important part of the Hailun story," Strmec said.

Then, in 2006, Chen was looking to develop an identity as a manufacturer under his own name.

"For the North American market, we decided we would go and do something completely crazy," Strmec said. "We decided we would go with a Chinese product and a Chinese name and market it as a quality piano."

Sure enough, at their first NAMM Show, dealers asked the company why it was using

a Chinese name at a time when so much stigma surrounds Chinese-made products.

"But we stated at that time that we believe if we have transparency, a high level of quality, and our instruments perform, we'll win the day anytime," Strmec said.

CONTROLLING QUALITY

That emphasis on quality remains the same today. Hailun pianos have been designed by all-star team of renowned engineers who oversee the production process from "bolt to box." At the beginning, Hailun brought on eminent piano engineer Frank Emerson, who designed for Baldwin and Mason & Hamlin, and still employs a team of world-class designers.

"We never aspired to having a plethora of confusing models. We focus on improving those that we had worked on," Strmec said.

Looking ahead, Hailun is staying keen on what's next in piano world.

"We're dealing with a 250 year old industry that has to come into the 21st century," he said. "We're doing it by not only focusing on the acoustic piano, but looking forward to the fusion of the digital world." **MI**

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QUALITY CONTROL

In Japanese, Sakae means “prosperity” — something the drum manufacturer focuses on achieving not through quantity, but through the quality of drum kits it offers musicians.

“We wish [prosperity] for all musicians, and so we have tried to create the best drums and percussion instruments for them as possible,” said Shinji Kurematsu, who does international sales for Sakae.

And thanks to a recent distribution agreement with Korg USA, Sakae will now be able to offer those instruments to a larger audience.

Sakae started as a boutique custom drum manufacturer in 1925. It was the high-end OEM drum builder for Yamaha for more than 40 years, but just began manufacturing and marketing drums under the Sakae Drums name last year. By partnering with Korg USA this past January, Sakae is set to take the drum world by storm.

“Our desire is not to be just like everyone else, or to become the biggest mass producer of drums in the world,” Kurematsu said. “Instead, we want to craft musical instruments that would make our founders and legendary artists proud.”

TECHIE’ DRUMS

Sakae uses its many years of drum-building experience to bring players not only fine hand craftsmanship, but also the latest in technology.

“Our passion for drum building has inspired us to want to deliver new advancements to musicians,” Kurematsu said. “Now, with our ability to bring drums to



Eizo Nakata

Sakae Drums’ new distribution deal with Korg USA focuses on quality

market under our own name, we have been able to pursue those advancements. So, the current line of Sakae drums offers many of those distinctive features.”

Some of those features include oversized vents for low, rich tones; a cradle mounting

system that holds the tom from the bottom rather than having it hang for better isolation; two kinds of rims for more variety of sound; and heavier gauge snare wires and more strands, for a crisp, sharp response.

Sakae’s latest Celestial series

kits feature Chamber Specific Technology (CST), which offers a richer, more expressive sound. It consists of a combination of carefully matched techniques and special materials in four areas: shell wood type, shell bearing edges, shell plies and shell thickness.

PARTNERS IN QUALITY

When looking to expand its distribution, Sakae President Eizo Nakata said the drum company was searching for a partner who understood how to build and maintain a high-brand image rather than just sell a high quantity of products at large discounts to meet sales numbers.

“We came across Korg USA, and noticed the high quality brands in their lineup,” Nakata said. “They are the right company to maintain Sakae’s brand image for us.”

With the Korg deal under Sakae’s proverbial belt, the drum manufacturer is positioned for great growth in the U.S. market. But, Kurematsu said the most important issue for Sakae when choosing a distribution partner was finding one that focused on quality as much as Sakae does.

“Of course, we want to make big sales, but we know that will come as a result of achieving the purpose of why Sakae is here,” Kurematsu said. “We want to bring high-quality instruments to the market for musicians and have everyone know why they are high quality. This is what we expect from Korg: to be able to promote the brand in the market in that way. And then the sales result will come for us both.” **MI**

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LANIKAI | OUTREACH

Lanikai Partners With Non-Profit

Lanikai Ukuleles has partnered with Hawaiian ukulele virtuoso and composer Jake Shimabukuro's Four Strings Foundation. The non-profit, founded by Shimabukuro and educator Polly Yukevich in 2013, seeks to curate music education workshops nationwide. Lanikai has provided its patented TunaUkes to schools and educators in support of this initiative.

"Lanikai's TunaUke creates the ability for beginners to adjust intonation in a way they weren't able to previously," Shimabukuro said. "It affords new possibilities for students to explore intonation in solos and ensem-

ble playing and the adjustable saddle makes this instrument accessible and useful to beginners and pros alike."

The first collaborative event took place at Harvard University on March 26 with Shimabukuro leading a beginner's ukulele workshop using 100 TunaUkes.

"We are so excited Four Strings has partnered with Lanikai for this event and are planning more like it," Yukevich said. "It is our hope that events like this will encourage people to join us in spreading the ease and joy that is inherent to playing the ukulele."

{lanikaiukes.com}



MAPEX | WEB

MAPEX REVAMPS SITE

Mapex recently launched its revamped and updated website. The new site features responsive Web design for optimal viewing and navigation by the end-user regardless of their screen size or device type.

The new Mapex home page gives the consumer a quick glance of all things Mapex, showcasing the company's latest products, news and events, making the most widely searched information available right up front rather than forcing visitors to dive deep into the site.

Mapex has also simplified its product navigation to be more intuitive and responsive. Products can be sorted by series, experience level or popularity. Product information, such as shell material, finish and configuration are readily available, while videos provide in-depth demonstrations and testimonials by top artists. {mapexdrums.com/us}

TMP | DISTRIBUTION

TMP Pro Named a Mackie Distributor

TMP Pro has reached an agreement with Loud Technologies to distribute Mackie products in the United States. Mackie offers consumers a wide range of professional audio products, from loudspeakers and mixing consoles to studio and recording equipment. TMP Pro

has built a line of 170 pro-audio brands. Since Shure Microphones first signed on in 1985, TMP Pro has consistently followed a formula of establishing strong partner relationships with vendors.

"We are very excited about this new partnership," said John Hennessey,

vice president of operations at TMP Pro Distribution. "Mackie's products are a great fit for our team. By combining Mackie's tradition of excellent products with TMP Pro's tradition of excellent customer service, we see a bright future ahead." {musicpeopleinc.com}

ARRIBA | MOVE

ARRIBA MAKES A MOVE

In response to growing demand, Arriba Products has moved its world headquarters to a new, larger location in City of Industry, Calif. The move doubles the amount of space for Arriba. "Operating out of a bigger and more modern facility in City of Industry will

allow Arriba to keep enough inventory in stock to help meet the growing demand for our products," said Scott Davies, director of Arriba Products. "Now Arriba can better serve DJs, KJs and VJs worldwide who rely on our cases and bags to keep their gear safe



and clean." Arriba's line includes the AC series for mobile lighting gear, the AS series for audio equipment, the AL series for DJ accessories and the Truss series, among others. arribacase.com

inMusic

INMUSIC | ADDITIONS

InMusic Brands Adds Three

InMusic recently announced the addition of three professional product brands from D&M Holdings to its existing family of brands. Denon Professional, Marantz Professional, and Denon DJ join a family that includes, Akai Professional, Alesis, Alto Professional, ION Audio, Numark, M-Audio, AIR Music Technology, and Mixmeister.

"By adding Denon Professional, Marantz Professional, and Denon DJ to our family of brands, we're strengthening our base of DJ assets while extending our footprint in the professional market to the commercial installation and contractor segments," said Jack O'Donnell, owner and CEO of inMusic. "We're excited about the products and technologies developed by these established brands, and look forward to writing the next chapter in the D&M Pro story by creating new, innovative products for Denon Professional, Marantz Professional, and Denon DJ customers."

"We are pleased to have reached an agreement with inMusic to license the rights to the D&M Pro brands as this is another step in our strategy to continue focusing on our core consumer brands," said Jim Caudill, CEO at D&M Holdings. "We are confident that inMusic will bring the required focus and investments to accelerate the growth of these well respected brands."

inmusicbrands.com

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JUNO...it's my first Vandoren

DANSR | WEB

Dansr Debuts New Site

To kick off a year-long celebration of its 10th anniversary, DANSR has launched the all-new dansr.com.

Designed in partnership with the award-winning Todd Allen Design, the new site will be a portal for musicians, industry professionals, teachers, students, and parents — anyone who wants the latest information on DANSR and its brands, Vandoren and Denis Wick. The new site features easy access to

product information, artist bios, videos and more.

“Our dealers and artists have been offering suggestions all along and we’ve been listening,” said Andy Blanco, Vandoren brand manager. “The new site is mobile-friendly, easy to navigate, and visually stunning. Plus, the new interface will make the popular WAVE Vandoren e-newsletter much easier to read.”

dansr.com



HAL LEONARD | DISTRIBUTION

HAL LEONARD, CAKEWALK TEAM UP

Cakewalk’s product line — both professional and consumer — will now have additional North American distribution through Hal Leonard. Cakewalk is best known for its SONAR X3 family.

“Hal Leonard is an established and highly respected outlet for a wide variety of technology products,” said Michael Hoover, Cakewalk president. “Their expertise in reaching crucial markets — including education, worship, and independent MI retailers — will further Cakewalk’s

continuing growth and recognition as a manufacturer of premium, thoughtfully designed software.”

“[Cakewalk’s] current product line complements what we offer, is ideal for instructional bundles, and presents new opportunities for retailers by offering a product family that spans the range from beginner to recording professional,” said Doug Lady, senior vice president of sales for Hal Leonard.

halleonard.com; cakewalk.com

Artist Approved



Dixon Drums has added Grammy Award-winning recording and touring drummer Gregg Bissonette to its artist program.

Bissonette’s choice of Dixon comes from its synergetic vision to advance the art of drumming through quality craftsmanship, innovation and education. He will be involved with Dixon on a broad spectrum of levels, serving as artist, clinician, ambassador, and product consultant

beginning with the development of an Artisan series Gregg Bissonette Signature drum set this fall.

“I’ve always had a great passion for drum gear and a fascination with the history of drums and drumming,” Bissonette said. “With Dixon, I can contribute my experience as a whole to the growth and development of a brand committed to quality, sound and the art of drumming.”

playdixon.com

APPOINTMENTS



Samantha Pink

TMP APPOINTS TWO

The Music People (TMP), parent company for the On-Stage family of brands and TMP Pro Distribution, has recently filled two key roles, bringing on Samantha Pink as director of operations and Allison Honeyman as strategic accounts manager.

Pink joins TMP after a 14-year career with Full Compass, where she served as vice president of procurement, product management

and merchandising.

Before coming to TMP, Honeyman worked as a coordinator for fashion website, Rue La La, as well as served several roles at ESPN, including human resources and recruiting.

With her background supporting client relations at ESPN, Honeyman looks forward to developing new business partnerships as strategic accounts manager.

{onstagestands.com}

Zildjian has announced the promotion of Jerry Smith to North America sales manager.

D'Addario has named Elijah Na-

varro to the newly created position of percussion junior product specialist.

Industry veteran Jeff Dunmire has been appointed national sales man-

ager at Kurzweil Home Digital U.S.

Levy's Leathers recently appointed Glen Booth North American sales manager.

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Note From Mark Goff

Making a Difference in D.C.— How the Fly-In for Music Education Impacted Me Personally and Professionally

NAMM's annual D.C. Fly-In, May 19-21, 2014, presents an opportunity for NAMM Members to take Capitol Hill by storm, making the case for comprehensive school music education programs. Each year, leaders of the music product industry, celebrity artists and other industry influencers join together encouraging congressional leaders to support music education for all children. Described as galvanizing and inspirational, the event gathers a variety of representatives from our industry, including retailers and manufacturers of different sizes and segments. Here Mark Goff shares his Fly-In experiences in D.C., the application on a local level and the power of every NAMM Member to make a difference.

I began participating in the NAMM Fly-In in 2010 and that initial Fly-In was also my first visit to our nation's capital. I spent a lot of time that year admiring the amazing buildings designed and built during the late 1700s and early 1800s. It is truly an inspiring place full of history, culture and symbols of America's greatness. I saw firsthand how our federal government actually works and was astounded by the fact that I could simply make an appointment, travel to Washington, discuss my issues with an elected official or their staff, and return home having participated in the democratic process.

Of course, there are also frustrations: the partisanship, the glacial pace it takes to get things done and the continual media frenzy that causes officials to react rather than lead. But I keep going back each year because I know that my voice, along with those of my fellow NAMM colleagues, is being heard and making a difference. We never run into

resistance about the value of music education. In my experience, the overwhelming majority of elected officials and their staff members that I've met with are products of school music programs. So we begin each meeting with the common understanding that music education is important and needs to be preserved for future generations. Not all groups that go to Washington enjoy such an advantage.

As a music store owner, my experience with NAMM in Washington, D.C., has also given me the skills and confidence to engage in the fight to keep school music programs strong in my home state of Indiana. I now have the opportunity to take what I learned during the NAMM Fly-Ins and work alongside Indiana music educators, community leaders and fellow businesspeople to strengthen our school music programs at home.

The evidence of school music's impact is overwhelmingly positive for students, families and communities. Better grades. Higher graduation rates. Fewer behavioral problems. Creative problem-solving. Better listening skills. And the list goes on.

I encourage all NAMM Members to participate in the annual Fly-In. If you've never been, I hope you'll consider joining us next year. You'll probably arrive a little scared, but I guarantee you'll go home with some new friends and a sense of pride that you made a difference by participating in our nation's democratic process.

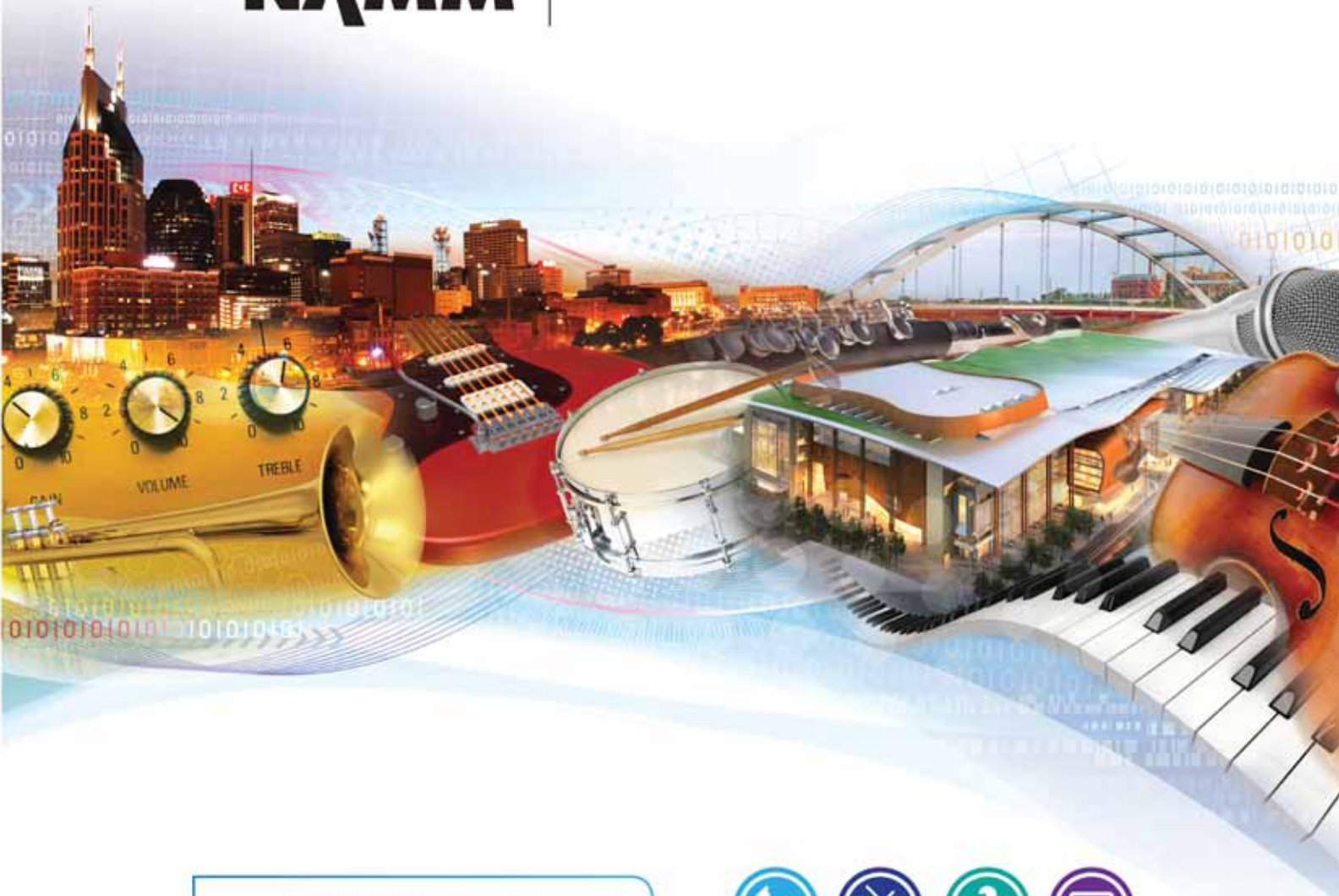
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Simon Fuller - FOH, Dry The River

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IDEAS

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INDEPENDENT RETAIL | BY TED ESCHLIMAN

BRICK & MORTAR BATTLES

I have a favorite Eddie Bauer leather bomber jacket I purchased a decade ago. I've worn it with plenty panache, but its distressed condition was failing spouse approval at nicer gatherings, putting me on the hunt for a replacement. I'd returned to Eddie Bauer for one, but they no longer offered it, even online. I kept my eye out at other brick-and-mortars for a comparable non-brand name jacket.

When the Nebraska winter kicked in, my quest became urgent. I decided to go online since I felt I'd exhausted my local options. After affirmation through Amazon customer reviews, I had it in a box at my door in five days, no shipping charge.

Being a local store owner, I like to practice what I preach, and buying high-ticket items on the Internet goes against my grain. Still, this was a lesson learned on how important it is to keep my business competitive in price and the new level of service. Did I mention I got the new jacket in five days? Compared to chain clothing stores, our employees have more resources at our disposal for handling special order requests, but the new retail comes with caveats on two tech-



nological fronts: transparency and urgency.

TRANSPARENCY

We're inclined to think customer decisions are all about "the deal." Price is important, but most level-headed customers (especially your loyal ones) just want to know they are purchasing within the contextual safety of a "fair" price. The bad news is there is bountiful comparison information for purchasing your goods for outside your store. No secret, often cheaper. They can also get plenty of opinions — as much mis-information as information. The good news is that same re-

connaissance is at your sales staff's fingertips, too. We can't hide the truth and when we try, we lose a customer forever.

We're implementing a new era of in-store "transparency" — a major retail shift for us. At our Web-ready registers we already look up information, and some competitor's pricing in front of the customer, but we're experimenting with a plan equipping key salespeople with the access to store-owned tablets, iPads and Kindles, freeing them to get out and rub elbows with customers. We want the opportunity to know where they are shopping and compare in real-time, maybe take the journey with them.

Some sales crew have already been doing this with their own personal cell phones, but I feel it's the store's responsibility to make this resource available with store Wi-Fi so customers can do so freely, too. They aren't cheap, but it's not necessary everyone has an individual one. We'll go about it slowly, adding a few floor tablets at a time.

URGENCY

Another technological front is competing with time. When customers find something they

want us to order, we are competing against FedEx overnight, Amazon Prime and the myriad of today's "get it now" options. If we get special orders, we need to keep in mind the hourglass has just turned and the sands of customer patience have immediately started running thin. There's a long path from clerk, manager, purchasing agent, vendor/distributor, and shipping and receiving. We must drastically shorten the distance, and every step in this chain requires a mindset of quick strike and urgency.

Gone are the days of letting orders stack up on a spindle, waiting for volume discount. Sometimes buyers have to forego the extra 5 percent to keep the customer coming back. Treat special orders like hot potatoes — no fingers in the chain get burned.

Ultimately, brick and mortar offers the best sales experience, but we need to visibly demonstrate price competitiveness and product immediacy. We fall off our customers' radar when we don't. **MI**

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

LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

The Just-Hired Hump

When I owned my own business, I was better than most at keeping my sales staff informed and up to date. I used a program called “Sales Aerobics” to keep them constantly polished at their chosen vocation, through role playing and other proven sales training techniques. They were exposed to this training on a daily basis, so those who stuck around long term got themselves a pretty good education.



Don't squander your resources. Training new hires properly is key

The problem I had was getting people over the hump after they were first hired.

I had every excuse for being so lax in my initial training of new hires. I certainly did not have the time in my busy days to do the training myself. My veterans — those most likely to help do the training — were too valuable to lose from the sales floor. What should I do, hire a training manager? Who can afford that? Use NAMM University or other outside sources? I couldn't. I needed to get a quick return on this new hire, and get them on the floor earning their way.

So I watched people come and go, blaming them for not trying hard enough or interviewing beyond their talents. The reality was that I was squandering resources. I was letting potentially really good people slip away, and I was probably causing some who stayed to under-perform.

SWEET SUCCESS

Today, I work for Sweetwater, and they've got training down to a science. Before anyone in sales ever has the opportunity to deal with the public, they go through an intensive 13-week, 8-hours-per-day training session. They learn the company philosophies, the products they're selling, sales techniques, and a full curriculum that's the equivalent of a master's level course. Let me tell you, these people are prepared by the time they graduate. And they only graduate if they're able to prove that they know their stuff. Sweetwater University graduates are sales superstars. And if you've followed Sweetwater's meteoric growth, you already know the results.

Most of us mere mortals don't have the resources to do what Sweetwater does. But simply willing our new hires to succeed clearly doesn't work either.

In hindsight, I would handle new hires a whole lot differently. For starters, sit down and create a set of non-negotiable skills that my new hires must possess before they “graduate.” Having this roadmap assures that essential knowledge and skills get taught.

Knowing the expense of having someone new fail, I'd personally devote an hour or a day — probably before normal business hours — and assign staff members specific topics to teach during the day. While they're in “teacher mode,” that would become their primary responsibility. If they're charged with doing this in one-hour blocks, it would be entirely feasible that they could be considered unavailable for anything else during that time. I'd schedule manufacturers' reps, use all available NAMM tools, and invest in outside resources. Running a small business makes it hard to find the time to do training properly. But your new employee and your business deserve no less. **MI**

Gerson Rosenbloom is the vice president of strategic management at Sweetwater Sound, the former president of Medley Music and a past



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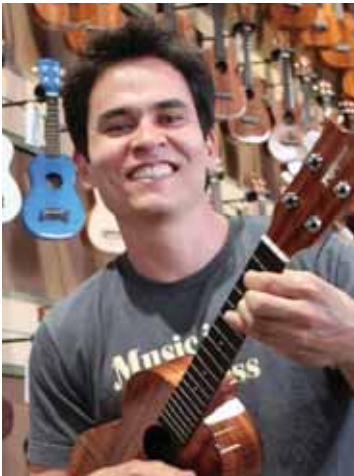
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ECONOMIC RHYTHMS | BY PETER DODS

Music for the Masses

I'm obsessed with playing the electric guitar. When I bought my business, I couldn't play any instruments at all. I had some skills in studio production, but that's about it. I've developed more musicality in the last eight years than I ever dreamed possible. I'm not awesome by any means, but I can jam with others and have been told that my solo improv isn't half bad anymore. I'm the walking poster boy for my own product.



Spread the word that making music can be fun, no matter the experience level

I've taken lessons at my store, all of my gear is from my store, and my first experience of performing in front of an audience was on our very own sound stage during our first Thursday Jam Session that we hold every month. I have little to no natural ability, which leads me to espouse the idea that anyone can become a musician.

Learning an instrument is progressive. Too many people don't get that. They see a guy like Paul Gilbert play guitar and want to play guitar like that, too. They take a few lessons and realize there is a steep learning curve.

A lot of people quit at that point. People have a tendency to stay in their comfort zone, not realizing if they have a decent teacher, or even if they keep plugging away on their own with a few videos, that you just get better over time. To make matters worse, the theory behind music seems so abstract at first.

The language created to describe music theory seems like it was made to be complicated on purpose. The whole idea of flats, sharps, 1-4-5 chord combinations, and even musical notation, seems convoluted. Shoot ... there are 12 notes in a chromatic scale, the relationship between those notes in intervals is what sound

is about. Why complicate it? Why not call them 1-12?

SPREAD THE WORD

Music theory is an old language used to describe things guild type musicians didn't want common people to learn. I have no historical basis for this opinion — it's just a hunch. I still have

a ton to learn, but now that I understand music theory better, I feel like the language used to describe it is ridiculous.

Maybe it's the former high school teacher in me? I feel the same way about economics. It's another subject people get brainwashed into believing that it's hard to understand. I used to tell my AP Econ class, yelling at the top of my lungs and shaking a chair over my head, "This stuff is easy! It's just a silly language used to describe simple relationships that you probably already know!" As a teacher, I felt my chief duty was to reveal this simple truth and show them the way.

It's our job, as purveyors of musical equipment and education, to try to spread the word that learning how to play music is attainable by anyone at any age. We need to make it clear that while it isn't easy, it is progressive, and like anything in life worth doing, it takes commitment.

I've seen Cornel Hrisca-Munn, a drummer with no arms, killing it and a guitarist playing like a virtuoso with just his feet. If they can do it, anyone can. Let the cat out of the bag and tell the world that anyone can learn to play. **MI**

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

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THE CUSTOMER WHISPERER | BY GREG BILLINGS

Communications 2.0

A new customer recently told me a great story about how award-winning author David Ritz got Ray Charles to agree to let him co-write the biography, *Brother Ray*. For years Ritz couldn't get past Ray's manager. Finally, he decided to bypass the manager by sending Ray a telegram. When he asked Western Union if they could deliver the telegram in braille they said, "Sure, for a small extra fee." In a time before cellphones, Ritz spent days sitting in a Los Angeles motel room hoping the phone would ring. Ray eventually called and agreed to the book, a breakthrough for Ritz who went on to write biographies with Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, Lang Lang and many others. His story got me thinking about how we use today's communications technology to get past artificial barriers and communicate with our customers.



'The world of communications technology has exploded. Today, we have so many choices it's hard to know where or when to use what.'

Email is quick, easy and there's not much risk of rejection. But, will it get through their spam filter, and if so, will it be opened? If it is opened, will it be embraced or treated as a distraction? Everyone has their cellphone on at all times. But everyone also has caller ID. Will they pick up or will they let the call go to voice mail purgatory? Will they even listen to the voice mail? Is a post on their Facebook page intrusive? Is a handwritten postcard intimate or archaic? The world of communications technology has exploded. Today, we have so many choices it's hard to know where or when to use what.

EMAIL EXACTITUDE

If we just sit here and and wait for customers to come in, call or click our Adwords link, we are going to have a long, lonely day. We have to reach out. But how? A good rule is to use the last form of communication our customer used. It's their obvious preference.

If Mr. Businessman sent an email, return an email. We know it will be expected and will get through. The bonus is that we have time to think things through and finely craft our message.

Perfect grammar and spelling, links to supporting evidence and maybe even a picture, make an impressive message. However, in a world of malware, viruses and cookies many people won't open attachments. Use them sparingly and be sure to tell your correspondent what the attachment is and why it should be opened. If our message is ignored, we can just wait a few days and resend it. The little automatic "resend" message at the top is a subtle, third party, reminder that our previous message was ignored.

Since we all scroll our email list before opening, the subject line is critically important. It needs to be clever, engaging and enticing. The best example of email marketing success was the 2012 Obama campaign. Their research showed that the most effective subject line that got the most emails opened was, "Hey." Think of your message line as a headline. And because half of your recipients will be using mobile devices, message lines should be less than 25 characters.

TELEPHONE 101

The telephone is our workhorse. Of course they probably won't answer, but that may not be all bad. If we are using our business line they will see

our store name. In advertising terms, that is considered an impression. Impressions are expensive and this one is nearly free. Also, like an email, voice mail messages can be carefully crafted ahead of time. Good voice mail etiquette is to speak slowly and clearly, leave the phone number at the beginning and at the end of the message, and keep the message short.

A cellphone that doesn't display a name, just a number, is really handy. This gives the option of either calling on the business land line, with the benefit of an impression, or calling with a blind number. Don't forget the power of not leaving a message at all if you are on a blind line. Some people just can't resist calling back to find out who called them.

A soccer mom who sends you a text message has just invited you into her inner circle. Text messaging is personal, immediate and effective. And best of all, text messaging is a great way to send pictures. People really like pictures. Recently, I was trying to get a prospect we met before Christmas back into our store. She had ignored my emails and voice mails. As a last resort, I sent her a text message with a picture of a grand piano and the single word "Likey?" Three days later she visited with her family and bought a high-end grand piano. There is always something in a music store you can take a picture of and send to a prospect.

Whatever communication route you chose, be sure to end with a question or statement requiring response. Even something as simple as "please let me know."

Like David Ritz, we have to be creative and persistent to connect with our clients. Ritz tried to get in touch with Aretha Franklin for more than 20 years. Every time he published a book he sent her a copy and each time he traveled to Detroit he sent her a note saying when he would be in town, where he would be staying and that he would like to meet with her. One day she just called and said she was ready to do a book. Maybe it is a text message, maybe it is a post card, maybe it is a note in braille. The key is to just keep trying, and keep mixing it up until you find an approach that works. **MI**

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

⊕ GETTING THROUGH

- Send a short thank you note the day you get a customer's email address.
- Use a clever, enticing message line.
- Resend an email a day or two later if you don't get an answer.
- Call a customer who ignores an email.
- Always leave a voice mail on an identified line, but never more than two.
- Don't leave a voice mail on a blind line. See if they can resist the urge to call back.
- Send a text message to someone who ignores a voice mail.
- Send a postcard to someone who ignores all forms of communication.
- Always end with a question or statement requiring a response.



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By Katie Kailus
Photos by David Goldberg

RELATIONSHIP BUILDERS

Rand and Cindy Cook have turned Candyman Strings & Things into a community staple through the bonds they create with customers and employees

It's a Tuesday night at the bustling and historic New Mexican eatery Maria's. Rand and Cindy Cook are sipping margaritas and enjoying a dinner that has been occasionally interrupted by, not only restaurant staff who know the couple on a personal level, but patrons of the restaurant who also happen to be patrons of the Cook's music store, Candyman Strings & Things. The Cooks engage in a quick conversation that inherently ends with a short discussion about music and then find a way back to their margaritas — that is until the next person stops to chat.

It's these close relationships that have helped the Santa Fe-based full-line retailer grow into what it is today — a musical mecca where customers feel like they are part of something bigger — part of a family.

“The comfort level at this place, the positive vibe, and high ethical standards we have, foster close relationships with our customers,” Rand Cook said. “That's not something you advertise, that's just something that's going to happen or it isn't. We have worked hard and been fortunate enough to make that happen.”

But that good fortune didn't come without a lot of hard work. Candyman Strings & Things was founded in 1969 by Matt Schwartzman who passed away in 2009. That same year, Rand and Cindy purchased the business.

For the past five years, the Cook's have worked to transform the once self-proclaimed “hippie store” — which sold guitars along with records and other novelties — into the full-line musical powerhouse it is today.

>> MAKING CONNECTIONS

Right off the bat, the Cooks aimed to make their 10,000-square-foot store more accessible to all customers.

“We wanted to make the store appealing to someone who doesn’t play music,” Cindy said. “Once we heard about the research NAMM and Wanna Play had done that said 85 percent of people who don’t play an instrument want to play. We did some number crunching and looked to see how many people in our area would want to play.”

They found the numbers to be staggering. So, the couple also made it a point to turn the store into a more family-friendly space.

“It’s not that kids weren’t invited to Candyman before we purchased the store, there just wasn’t much here for them,” Cindy said. “We wanted to make it universal for everybody. Our heart is kind of with kids and turning them onto music. So, we started our lesson program and began hosting events and our annual summer rock band camp.”

Candyman is a bit of an educational hub, housing five private music studios and two large ensemble rooms. Its lesson program — which didn’t exist before the Cooks took over the business — sees about 110 students a week on all instruments. But it’s the store’s annual summer rock band camp that lets the Cooks exercise their passion for music education.

The program boasts 60 campers across all three sessions which last two weeks each. During the camp, the bands not only learn how to play classic rock hits while writing their own songs, they are also taught what it is like to be a professional working musician. They record their song in a professional recording studio and have air time on a local radio station where they use the skills they’ve learned to promote both their band and the concert they put on at the end of the session.

These lessons aside, the biggest lesson learned, according to the Cooks, is one of confidence and believing in yourself.

“There are so many kids that come in with a lack of confidence, and they just blossom,” Cindy said. “There have been kids that have come in that are depressed — middle school’s tough, high school’s

tough. So we try to empower the kids and create stronger bonds and take creative risks to empower them. When they see what they can do here, then they take that back to their walk of life and they realize that they can achieve things in other areas in their life.”

One particular life that was touched by the store’s camp was Mariah who had been a victim of bullying. While in the rock camp, Mariah came out of her shell and wrote a song that, according to the Cooks, captivated everyone who heard it. The tale of her journey helped Candyman win the Music Makes a Difference award at the 2012 Top 100 Dealer awards at that year’s Summer NAMM Show.

“During the camp, she just blossomed,” Rand said. “She wrote a beautiful, heart-string-yanking song. And since the camp, she’s been in national articles about how music can help overcome bullying. And her story is just one of a bunch.”

The Cooks said one of the most exciting parts about the camp are the bonds the students make with each other that last way past the two-week sessions.

“A lot of the bands are still together,” Rand said. “And they are still gigging. One even played at the Santa Fe Plaza during a summer concert series last year and opened for a renown Santa Fe musician.”

And that’s a kind of advertising you can’t pay for.

>> NO PARENTAL CONTROL

Kids love discovering music at Candyman so much, that sometimes they do so without their parents. And Rand and Cindy are perfectly fine with that.

“One of my favorite things about our business and one of the things that I am most proud of is when a little kid comes trucking through our door with their guitar and no parent because the parent pulled



From left: Cindy Cook, David Borrego, Rand Cook, Sam Atkinson and Max Kluger-Bell.

up, dropped them off and felt completely safe having their child in the store because there is that level of comfort and trust,” Rand said. “And we’ve worked hard to get there. That’s a big thing for us. We’ve been told by a few parents that they don’t trust their kids to other people so it’s nice when they say that.”

Cindy believes that kind of trusting relationship comes from engaging with their customers on a higher level than just making a sale. She said that having a trusting environment creates not only a positive learning space, but also helps grow the business by exposing kids to music first-hand with no rules.

“We tell everyone to come in and play the instruments while they are here,” she said. “It’s not a ‘hands-off’ area. By playing and experimenting with the instruments, we are creating new musicians to be our clients. Once school lets out this place just comes alive. Everybody hugs everybody. It’s great to see how the family has expanded in the last few years. We see kids that were small coming in now with full beards or tattoos.”

>> EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Besides creating relationships with customers and the community, the Cooks have made it a point to create strong connections with their employees. They create these bonds through regular outings with their staff to baseball games, picnics, parties and the “occasional impromptu cocktail hour at 6:05 p.m.”

The Cooks said that the close relationships that the employees have with each

other help them better serve their customers. “We have an incredible crew here and everyone is on the same page and has the same mission,” Rand said.

Cindy agreed, adding that their employees focus on the musical experience for the customer and are not just about making the sale. “[Some stores] might have employees that are the ‘buy low, sell high’ types and just want to get the next ambitious kid in that you can pay nothing to,” Cindy said. “That’s not us. In our desire to have a relationship with our community, we also want to be a family here. We want it to be a kind and fair and cooperative and loving place to be.”

Also helping foster bonds with customers is the fact that they know they’ll see the same familiar faces everytime they walk through Candyman’s door.

“We have zero turnover,” Rand said. “David Borrego, our sales manager, has been here on and off since the store’s inception in 1969. Sam Atkinson, our B&O guy, has been with the company for 11 years.”

Rand said part of the reason he’s so close with his staff comes from unconventional managing. He has worked out a deal with Atkinson where he can make his repair business grow using Candyman as a front.

“Instead of being like, ‘We are going to make all the money off the repairs,’ we decided that Sam could do all the repairs, and we were going to be the front for his repair business and charge him 25 percent, a very low rate, so he could make a good living and support his family,” Rand said.

As a result, Atkinson loves his job and that energy flows down through Candyman’s customers.

“Not one of us hates coming to work — we all love working here,” Atkinson said.

“What I like best about working at Candyman is doing good things for good people for good reasons. That’s what they allow me to do here. A lot of us don’t consider this a job. They are allowing us to be us and pay us for it.”

Creating a comfortable atmosphere where they can connect employees, customers and

parents was one of the Cooks main goals when they purchased the business, and so far so good.

“The environment in the store is one of my favorite things,” Rand said.

And, a lot of times, that environment travels with the Cooks all the way down the road to Maria’s. **MI**



Candyman moved into its current facility in 1984.



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WALK THROUGH

Candyman Strings & Things' 10,000-square-foot space features two levels with five lessons rooms, two large ensemble rooms and a few offices upstairs. The main showroom is downstairs. Here's a look into the store.



◀ MAIN SHOWROOM

"We designed this space so people can walk to the studios and the retail areas separately," Rand said. "So at 6:00 p.m., we lock the two gates that separate the lessons space from the retail, that way lessons can keep going well into the evening after the retail space closes."

▼ CANDYMAN GUITAR SIGN

The Cooks had a replica Candyman guitar sign made when they renovated the space in 2009. The original sign hung at the store's original location in downtown Santa Fe, N.M., but was demolished in a fire along with the building in 1981.



▲ LESSON ROOM

"There is almost no bleed through from studio to studio as the walls were specially built using a de-coupling technique, heavy rubber sheetblock, solid core doors and sound absorbing studiofoam," Rand said. "All studios are also equipped with cameras for the safety of our students and teachers. Sound from the studios can at times be heard in the retail space which is good for the feel of the store and insights curiosity from customers."



◀ PIANO ROOM

"The keyboard room is a dedicated demo studio with all instruments hooked up and ready to play," Rand said. "We wanted this room to be a quiet part of the store and give shoppers a chance to really hear and feel the different keyboards and digital pianos without competing with noise."



ACOUSTIC ROOM ▶

Dubbed the "crown jewel" of the store by the Cooks, the acoustic room is a humidified and acoustically sound space. Candyman stocks Martin, Taylor, Takamine and Cordoba guitars in the acoustic room.



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CONNECT WITH US



FROM THE TOP

RON MANUS | ALFRED MUSIC

INTERVIEWED BY MICHAEL GALLANT

HOW DO YOU START YOUR DAY?

I usually start out by grabbing a banana and a Snapple, jumping on email, and seeing what fires need to be put out. I like making sure that everything is on course and all systems are running. After that, normal business takes over.

IS BEING A MUSICIAN A PRE-REQUISITE FOR WORKING AT ALFRED MUSIC?

No, but over 80 percent of our employees are musicians. That includes our warehouse, accounting department, IT department — in fact, our IT head was a music engraver before he got into his current field. So we attract a very music-centric group of employees, even if they're not performing musicians. And the people who don't play an instrument are big fans. That love of music helps us. Everyone who works here cares about the company and what we do.

WHAT'S THE OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE?

Alfred Music is a private company that's always been owned, majority-wise, by a member of the Manus family. My grandfather, Sam Manus, started it. Morty Manus, my father, took over after him, and now I'm the third generation. Starting in 2009, we decided to turn about 45 percent of Alfred Music into an ESOP — Employee Stock Ownership Plan — because I wanted our staff to have more stake in the company and help it grow. Employees earn shares according to the length of time they're here and their roles in the company. It's a pretty cool thing.

HAVE YOU SEEN REAL RESULTS FROM THAT POLICY?

I have. People are already passionate about this business. But, when you have someone who's passionate and energized, and then you give them something like this, it removes any feelings of, "Wow, I'm doing all this hard work and someone else is benefitting from it down the road. If I help grow the business, and then the owner sells it, I'm out of luck." Bringing in the ESOP removed any resistance to people diving in and making a career out of working at Alfred Music.

WHAT'S IT LIKE RUNNING A FAMILY BUSINESS?

Pretty awesome. I get to work with my mother and father every day. As they have slowly stepped back from their roles of running the company into a more relaxed work environ-

ment, I've continued to get all the wisdom, help and advice from them. It's their dream, and I get to help extend that.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN PERSONALLY INVOLVED WITH THE COMPANY?

Technically, I've been involved since the age of six. At that time, instead of going to summer camp, I worked at our warehouse in New York. As I got older and while in college, I worked every summer in the sales department. This has been a family business that we've all loved.

ARE THERE EVER CHALLENGES THAT COME FROM THE FAMILY ASPECT OF THE BUSINESS?

There can be stress and tension related to it. You never want to let your parents down. But I love the opportunity to be in the situation that I'm in. I feel blessed that this kind of pressure can fall on me, because a lot of people would kill for that. I get the opportunity to continue my family's work, and I feel that I'm up to the challenge.

GIVEN THE FAMILY ORIGINS, WHY IS IT ALFRED MUSIC AND NOT MANUS MUSIC?

My grandfather, Sam Manus, who started the company in the 1920s, originally called it Manus Music. At the same time, there was another company called Alfred and Company. In the late '20s, when the stock market crashed, my grandfather was able to purchase the Alfred and Company name, and copyrights that came with it, and enlarge his company. He put Manus Music and Alfred Music under the same name, so it's been Alfred Music since then. Not many people know that history.

HOW HAS DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY CHANGED THINGS FOR ALFRED MUSIC?

When you ask about digital technology and music, most people think about downloading. We don't have that mindset here, and we don't see it as a losing proposition. We try to use the digital world to make the experience for our end users better and more fun. Alfred Music is focused on music education and getting more people to play — we begin peoples' careers as music makers and the longer we can get people to stay with music, the better. So we've focused on using our digital technologies to get people excited about learning and making music.



Alfred's
**Teach Yourself
To Play Guitar**

**Complete
Acoustic Pack**



DVD
DVD

THE DETAILS

RON MANUS , CHAIRMAN AND CEO

HQ: Los Angeles

Founded: 1922

Employees: 271

Best selling product: In 2013, the Teach Yourself Ukulele Complete Starter Kit.

Fun Fact: In addition to running the show at Alfred Music, Manus sings and plays guitar for the punk rock band sASSafrASS. He also mixes a mean Ketel One martini with home-made blue cheese-stuffed olives.

DO YOU WORRY ABOUT PEOPLE ILLEGALLY SHARING YOUR MUSIC ONLINE?

There have always been ways of stealing and things like that happened long before the Internet — people would photocopy music, for example. For the most part, it impacts a very small part of our business. When it comes to the Internet, we have a business affairs department that helps take down illegal websites. We also work with groups like the National Music Publishers Association that are very active in going after sites that illegally distribute published music. So, as an industry, we're all working together.

ARE YOU ABLE TO GO AFTER EVERY WEBSITE THAT PUBLISHES ILLEGALLY?

We've actually ended up working with some websites, ones that you might think would be illegal, to structure on-the-books licenses that work for everybody. So, we've succeeded in pulling some of those sites into behaving by the rules. We basically try to find a way to legalize sites when possible — and take down the ones that are just rogue.

HOW IS IT THAT PIRACY ONLY IMPACTS A SMALL PART OF YOUR BUSINESS?

The people who download sheet music illegally, typically, are not people who would be our customers in the first place. They see that something is free, take a look and throw it out. They're people who wouldn't have bought the book anyway.

WHAT'S THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOU FACE IN YOUR POSITION?

My father once told me that publishing is easy but people are hard. [Laughs.] As a manager, I try to surround myself with really good people and empower them. I think of it in terms of APE — attitude, passion and energy. We look for those qualities in everyone that we hire. Ultimately, I want to have a staff that can run on its own, and I want to make myself unnecessary. I want everyone to know our mission and our goals, and have the ability and skills and tools to work in those directions.

DOES THE EFFORT PAY OFF?

Once you teach people correctly, they become very autonomous. We've broken the company into teams that focus on the different musical areas we work in, so we can go in a million different directions at once. Because we're passion-

ate about what we do and we have people who have a specific responsibility for each of those areas, we don't drop the ball. It's all about empowering people, getting them up to speed, and then getting out of their way.

YOU RECENTLY STARTED DISTRIBUTING FINALE AND GARRITAN.

Yes! It's the perfect relationship between us and MakeMusic by pairing the leader in music notation software with the leader in music education. Alfred Music has been licensing content with MakeMusic for many years, and we're happy to expand our relationship with them. They have developed an incredible line of music technology products that play an instrumental role in the way the world composes, teaches, learns and performs music. With our state-of-the-art distribution center and our amazing sales and marketing staff, Alfred Music is able to offer a dynamic environment that will distribute these physical and digital products to a wider audience.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHICH NON-ALFRED PRODUCTS TO DISTRIBUTE?

We try to align ourselves with companies that we're proud of and that are making products that help people experience the joy of making music. For example, one of our top-selling distribution products is PocketStrings. This is the perfect complement to our guitar methods. This awesome product is perfect for the guitarist who wants to practice scales with a super portable practice tool that fits almost anywhere.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHAT MUSIC TO PUBLISH?

We have editors, experts in each musical area, and they're always looking for holes in our catalog and ways to respond to the latest demands. Our editors go to NAMM so they can hear first-hand from dealers what's working and what isn't. They also stay in close touch with educators and authors. We have an army of writers who know how to find us when they have good ideas to pitch. We get submissions that come in all the time and sometimes gems just show up. If an idea really excites us, we try to find a way to get it in the production plan.

IF NOT MUSIC, WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING?

I think I would be in construction or, more likely, a repairman. I remember taking clocks and stereos apart as a kid and electrocuting myself. [Laughs.] Finding problems and fixing them, and learning how things work, has always been interesting to me.

'ULTIMATELY, I WANT TO HAVE A STAFF THAT CAN RUN ON ITS OWN, AND I WANT TO MAKE MYSELF UNNECESSARY.'

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The saxophone section from the NASMD Sandy Feldstein Big Band jams.



From left: Fred Schiff, All County Music; D'Ann and Pat Averwater, Amro Music; and Jerry and Myrna Portman, Portman's Music Superstore.

STRIKE



The new NASMD Board, from left: Beth Houlihan, Kidder Music; CJ Averwater, Amro Music, Rosi Johnson, Mississippi Music; Evan Jones, Bandland; Ron Kuykendall, Saied Music, Mike Meyer, Meyer Music; George Quinlan, Quinlan & Fabish; and Greg Lyons, Royal Music.



From left: Jake Connolly of Connolly Music and Alan Moore of Griggs Music at an educational session.



Getting ready for Road Rep Olympics, from left, Ellen Leeman Brown, Musical Innovations; Nick Averwater, Amro Music; Spiderman and Katelyn Summerhays, Summerhays Music.



From left: George Quinlan, Quinlan & Fabish; Jeff Eckroth, Eckroth Music; Dennis Udice, KMC Music; Tevis Laukat, Cannonball Music.





Wes Edwards, Draisens Edwards Music, competes in the Road Rep Olympics.



From left: Roger Eaton; Yamaha Corp. of America; Gary Wilder, Mike Skinner and Greg Grieme from Dansr/Juno.



From left: Saul Friedgood, Eastman Music; Jon Harris, Harris-Teller; and Scott Summerhays, Summerhays Music.

UP THE BIZ



From left: Hari Bhavatha and Jacqueline Shear, Amati Fine Instruments; Sean Steinman, Summerhays Music; Tim Smithe, Walter E. Smith Furniture; Jason Spottek, Melk Music.

Warm weather and strong educational sessions proved to be the perfect combination for school music dealers during the 52nd National Association of School Music Dealers Convention in Orlando, Fla., during April. With improving business conditions, dealers and suppliers flocked to the convention, which drew more than 400 attendees from across the nation.

They were treated to a slate of speakers covering everything from omni-channel retailing to specialty shop success. The following pages offer a glimpse into some of this year's top sessions.



Russ Beacock, Beacock's Music, plays with the NASMD Sandy Feldstein Big Band.



Whitney Grisaffi, Ted Brown Music, receives the Charter Dealer Award from Juno's Gary Winder.



They were faking it. From left, CJ Averwater, Amro Music; Cris Behrens, Summerhays Music; and Ryan West, West Music.

8 WAYS TO CREATE A UNIQUE RETAIL EXPERIENCE



George Hines

George Hines, owner of George's Music, has seen the shift in how his customers buy products. But instead of longing for the "good old days," he and his omni-channel chain have embraced the new way people shop. The heart of his strategy is simple — create a unique retail experience — be it online or in-store. Here are eight ways his Pennsylvania-headquartered company does just that.

1) REINVENT LESSONS

George's Rock Camps are "a social event," he told NASMD attendees. "They've gone through six weeks of classes. It allows them to create new friendships because we're putting players together. Then it allows them to expose themselves to different instruments."

George's also does specialty instrument events, like a two-week harmonica class. "It's \$99," he said. "It's on two Saturdays, four hours each day. We limited it to eight people. It's mostly older people. We collected \$800 in fees. And by the end, we did almost \$3,000 in harmonica sales."

2) RETHINK ONLINE OFFERINGS

"Which is more powerful, the brick and mortar location, or online?" Hines asked. "We believe it's really neither. There's the story about Steve Jobs when he came back to Apple. One of the things he wanted to do when he came back into the company was open retail stores.

"What he knew that we need to understand is that the consumer wants it all. They want a place that they could go to. They also want to be able to buy 24/7. That comes to the new term you hear out there now, omni-channel — Can you do catalog, retail, online? How are you selling your goods? How are you servicing the consumer? It's through a multi-channel approach. That is the future."

3) CREATE THEMES

"Our whole year is laid out in advance by themes," Hines said. "We might have themes around guitars. It might be a promotion we do around Halloween. Everything is based around a theme. It's not based on selling alone. It's based on creating experience of coming to the store."

4) SELL SOLUTIONS, NOT PRODUCTS

"When we sell electronic drums, the majority of those sales are through a solution-based approach," Hines said. "We make sure they have they have the throne, a set of headphones — so mom and dad have quiet — sticks and a stick bag. The average ticket, instead of \$499, goes up to \$580. That package is probably not available anywhere else."

5) LOOK AT YOUR ONLINE REVIEWS

"This is where you reinvent how you interact with your customers," Hines said. "In the past, I had no problem asking a customer, 'I'm going to give you some cards. Would you let some of your friends know that I took great care of you?' That's how it used to happen. The new way is to ask your customers, 'If you were really happy with the way you were treated today, would you mind giving online and writing a review?'"

6) CREATE MEMORABLE EVENTS

"Can you make it so Halloween or St.

Patrick's Day or Christmas are reasons for customers to come to your store?" Hines asked.

"We did a uke event. Everyone there was a beginner. They played the song really well, and we videoed it and put it on YouTube. Tape your events, then post them. It creates an experience that they won't get any other way."

7) CREATE AN IN-STORE EXPERIENCE

"We do unsolicited demos. If something new comes out, we start asking people, 'Have you seen or heard about it?'"

"You're trying to create an experience when customers come into your store and you're interfacing with them like this. You're giving them another reason to come back in and see what's new."

8) UP THE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM) GAME

"The relationship with customers is the only thing that's not commoditized — it's unique," Hines said. "I can also define it in many ways. So, I'm documenting what that CRM is all about, then I'm working it like crazy.

"When you ship [with] Fedex, UPS, whatever, it creates a ticket confirmation. We send that information to the customer, but every day, every one of them gets a call, too. I don't know anyone else doing it, so as far as I'm concerned it's another value added." **MI**

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Robin Walenta and Joel Menchey

TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS FOR SPEED & PROFIT

“The amount of money you save through saving time is tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of dollars.”

For the past several years, an ad hoc technology committee formed by NAMM has been working to create a business-to-business technology standard to help automate transactions using a common electronic data format throughout the supply chain.

Sound geeky? Even those on the committee will say, “You bet.”

But there’s gold in that nerdiness. The Standard is now in place, and two members of that committee — West Music President Robin Walenta and Menchey Music President Joel Menchey — were on-hand at NASMD to discuss how NAMM’s B2B Standards are helping retailers and suppliers cut down on data entry errors, increase efficiency and increase profits.

“All of this is going to help create solutions to make us better as an industry and as companies,” said Walenta. “It’s already been created. The heavy lifting is done. Now all you have to do is implement it. This is not an IT issue. This is a business issue. It’s so easy for you to implement.”

At the heart of the new standard is the ability for companies to exchange data via Extensible Markup Language, known as XML. XML is simply a language that allows for the electronic transport and storage of data. In the case of the musical products industry and the NAMM Standard, that data comes in the form of product information and product categories that are delivered between companies through electronic orders, shipments and invoices.

“When we started working on this with our point of sale provider, it was like pulling teeth trying to get suppliers to participate,” Menchey said. “As a retailer, I’m almost a little embarrassed now that the retail list isn’t nearly as long. The suppliers have really stepped up.”

Many retailers may already be using the Standard and don’t even know it. E-commerce solutions within the industry like ProActive, Retail Up and Aimsi/Active E powered by Tri-Technical Systems are already in compliance with the Standard. Also onboard is Omacro, the free closed B2B social network that exchanges product, price and marketing information between manufacturers, retailers, distributor and sales reps.

The goal is for the industry to implement the standard in every product category.

THE BENEFITS

So, why does the NAMM Standard matter?

“Because standards create consistency,” said Walenta. “Consistency provides better communication. Better communication enhances customer service. Improved customer service sells more products. All of this, while at the same time, you’re lowering your costs, increasing your bottom line. Profitable growth grows our market.”

Menchey noted that namm.org has all the resources necessary for retailers and suppliers to get started.

“At namm.org, the implementation guide

is very thorough,” he said. “It’s probably a lot geekier than a lot of us in this room are prepared to deal with, but it is complete. It explains the categorization, there are discussion forums and there is a complete summary of the B2B initiative.”

In discussing the advantages of the standard, Menchey said he worked with Tri-Tech/AIMsi, a system developed for members of AIMM, and the time necessary to set up his company’s system has been well worth the time investment.

“We started using electronic purchase orders seven or eight years ago,” he noted as an example. “As you can imagine, a huge time saver. We used to type purchase orders. Now we have a few supplier partners who are accepting electronic orders. We may call a product a pen. They may call it a writing utensil, but it locks. As soon as we submit that purchase order, they know what we want. It’s much more accurate, and it’s been a life saver.”

“When I got involved in the committee, I learned about all the things we had access to, but weren’t using. This is one of them. They have an electronic accounts payable invoice. That is so the suppliers can send us an invoice. We don’t even have to print it. We can see what it is, check it and go ahead and pay it.”

“The amount of money you save through saving time is tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of dollars, depending on the size of your company,” Walenta said. “It is significant.” **MI**

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Robert Christie

5 PLACES TO RING REPAIR SHOP PROFITS

Many years ago, when Robert Christie was tasked with finding ways for his company to become more profitable, he looked at the repair shop. Today, he owns A&G Central Music in Michigan, and still sees that repair shop as a key to success.

"I identified five areas in our business where we were handling repairs, and where we weren't quite doing it right," he told NASMD attendees. Here are his five areas and how he stepped up profits and customer service, too.

1. INSTRUMENT INTAKE

"Most of us looked at that as an opportunity to open the case, get the serial number off of the instrument, write up a repair ticket and get it into the repair shop," Christie said. "When the instruments come in, it's a huge sales opportunity. Are the accessories the student needs to play the instrument in the case? What's the condition of the mouthpiece? Is there a swab in there?"

"Here's something that we'd miss like crazy. We'd get the dinged up, dented trombone that's been passed down from one generation to the other. We'd fix it up and stick it back in the case that smells like death. Get the kid a case."

That change alone led to a 30-percent increase in his case business.

2. PREPARING ESTIMATES

Every instrument coming into A&G Central for repair receives a thorough estimate delivered by trained sales professionals. "It's a sales call," Christie said.

They tell the customer what it will take to put the instrument back into "perfect" playing condition, but make recommendations for work beyond playing condition. If there are dents in the bell of a horn, the sales team asks if the customer wants them fixed. If it's time for a routine checkup or ultrasonic cleaning, they tell the customer.

For Christie, it's not just profit, it's better customer service.

"You've got a trumpet that comes in,

and it's got a stuck valve and a stuck slide," Christie said. "A very simple, easy repair. The reason it's stuck, though, is the instrument's dirty. You can free up that slide and free up that valve for [about] \$28 and send the customer on their way. There are two problems with this: 1) If the instrument's dirty and that's the reason they stuck, what are the odds that something else is going to start sticking soon; 2) If you recommend that full ultrasonic cleaning, that price just went from \$29 to \$77 in our shop. That's \$48 more for that one repair."

Christie said that one suggestion adds \$20,000 a year to his repair shop billings.

3. DOING CUSTOM WORK AND STEP-UP REPAIRS

Christie said no matter the skill level of your repair department, there are opportunities for custom or step-up work on horns. He said to start with fancy valve buttons or gold-plated valve caps.

"Everyone wants to customize their horn," he said. "Think about how you're going to do it. The way we do it is carve out a little space on our sales floor," he said. "And even better, if you can, maybe take one or two of the instruments you have on display, jazz them up a little bit and stick them in the section as an example. That should help you increase sales."

4. BILLING

"In general, we charge a flat hourly rate

for our repairs," Christie said. "All of our playing condition jobs and our custom work is billed on an hourly rate. We take into consideration what it costs to run my shop and this is what we should charge for it.

"But we do have a number of items that are flat-rate repairs. Those are basically things we do over and over, and it's basically the same for every instrument. Any flat-rate repair we have is probably a higher volume repair for us. On those, we build more profit into them.

"Because of the way we call in our estimates, having in your hip pocket a number of these jobs that are flat-rate jobs allows the people who call to make a suggestion for other work that could be done without going back to the repair shop to get an estimate."

5. DON'T FORGET MAINTENANCE AGREEMENTS

"You've got to have them, but you've got to get them right," Christie said. "There are some things that have to be in a maintenance agreement to give value to your customer, but also to make sure it's right for you so you can make money on it.

"You don't need me to tell you the value of maintenance agreements. [Best Buy] employees have to ask you about the maintenance agreement three times. If the sales person is doing their job right, you can't walk out of a Best Buy without being asked three times if you want a maintenance agreement." **MI**

GUITARS & UKES IN THE CLASSROOM

If you haven't seen the latest trend in school music yet, don't worry, you will. A growing number of elementary schools are replacing recorder classes with ukulele lessons, while high schools are asking their band and orchestra teachers to also teach guitar. And school music retailers are battling to get their share of those sales.

"I see all of the colored ukuleles hanging at an elementary schools in the music room," said Jeff Mozingo, president of Mozingo Music. "My first question is, 'Where did you get those?' And my second question is, 'Why didn't you get them from me?'"

The panel, made up of Mozingo, Tracy Leenman, president of Musical Innovations, and David Jahnke, senior vice president at Hal Leonard, noted that both guitar and ukulele are becoming popular offerings in schools, but not necessarily at the expense of traditional school music programs.

Leenman said she put together an in-service day demonstration teaching elementary school teachers how to play ukulele in an hour.

"Since then, seven teachers in the district have purchased classroom sets of ukuleles," she said. "The elementary teachers are looking for something different from

recorders. And for young kids, guitar is not practical because of the size and the cost."

Leenman said that she has seen an increase in band rentals due to kids playing ukes in elementary school and then wanting to learn another instrument. "They feel they're good at music, and they're good at music and they like the ensemble," she said.

These programs do not cannibalize, they increase participation in music, added Jahnke. In a survey of B&O teachers who also teach guitar, "90 percent of teachers said they could reach students who otherwise would not participate in music classes," he said. **MI**



From left: Jeff Mozingo, Tracy Leenman and David Jahnke.

FIND YOUR SOUND.





Fred Schiff and Mark Goff

CREATING SPECIALTY SHOPS

Fred Schiff of All County Music and Mark Goff of Paige's Music give retailers their keys to success when delving into high-end markets.

A number of school music dealers are seeing new opportunities in step-up and professional instruments. So much so, that they're creating highly targeted specialty shops to take advantage.

Fred Schiff, president of All County Music in Tamarac, Fla., and Mark Goff, president of Paige's Music in Indianapolis, Ind., have jumped into the higher-end markets. At Paige's, Goff now spearheads three specialty shops — Chops Percussion, Encore Orchestral Strings and Indy Flute Shop. At All County, Schiff has opened Florida Flutes and, at press time, was launching a new venture called Florida Trumpets.

Here are a few of their pointers for venturing into the high-end market:

LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP

"You need to know how much step-up flute business you're doing already," said Goff. "When I say know your numbers, I mean all of them. What's your revenue in step-up flutes? What's your gross margin? What's your contribution margin?"

CASH FLOW CHANGE

"If you're going to go into this, there is a significant cash outlay," Schiff said. "So, your cash flow is going to change when you are making this investment because you'll have the capital expenditures up front.

"If you're used to turning things three times a year and all of a sudden, you get into the high-end business and you find out that doesn't turn as often. And, by the way, those things are more expensive than the things that do turn. So, you're going to have cash-flow timing differences."

KNOW YOUR PURPOSE

Schiff said to ask yourself if this is a passion project or a competitive strategy.

"Is this something you just want to do?" he asked. "Go ahead and do it, but I will

tell you, that will cost you. It's not for the faint of heart."

GET THE RIGHT SPECIALISTS

Goff said that the first thing he does after deciding to open a specialty shop is hire the right team.

"Whoever you bring on needs to be a legitimate member of that community that they are going to serve," he said. "You should also get someone who's aligned with your purpose. If you decide you're going to be a great local specialty shop and you bring on someone who has dreams to be a national player, it's probably not going to work.

"You need someone who is respected and understands the product and the people. You just can't fake it with these customers. When a high-end customer comes into your shop and wants to talk, they're speaking a language that I don't speak, and they're talking about products at a level that I don't understand. You need to get people who speak the same language."

CONNECT WITH INFLUENCERS

"You do this already, but as a specialist, you need to go out and see them, whether that means going out and bringing product to their studios, or get them back to your location so they can understand what you're doing and introduce them to the rest of your team," Schiff said. "It's not just about the violin or trumpet, it's the specialist that goes with it, so that when they have a concern, they've got a point man."

BE WHERE YOUR TARGET CUSTOMERS ARE

Goff said his specialty shop staff is constantly going to concerts, festivals and association conferences.

"Wherever those specialty people are gathered, we want to be there," he said. "We also like to participate in sectional

rehearsals. We go into the local schools and have our flute specialist run a sectional for the day."

SALES FOLLOW CREDIBILITY

"This is a grind. You establish small things," Schiff said. "And you make sure you are talking to the right people. Once you've got them in, you have to be able to demonstrate your product knowledge. You have to demonstrate your service knowledge."

MEASURE, ANALYZE, ADJUST, REPEAT

"It doesn't matter how we feel about it. What are the results?" Goff said. "The only way you'll know the results is to measure it. You've got to analyze it. Once you start analyzing, you're going to figure out ways to adjust. We have very specific performance indicators that we look at with each of these divisions and we adjust so they reach the goals that we set for them."

GROW PATIENTLY

"You have to be patient and with that patience is that investment of cash, ready, sitting on the side, that says, 'OK, we've made this commitment to this project, and it just doesn't happen overnight,'" Schiff said. "It's one customer at a time with a specialty shop. There is no mass marketing that brings them in. This is not buy one set of strings, get 10 for free. This is a one-at-a-time business.

"When you bring them in, you want them to spend some time so they can enjoy the experience. That's what you're providing in a specialty shop. Not only that, you're providing an experience that the customer can't find online. The ability to walk into a store and see and try this kind of inventory is an advantage. But you just have to be patient with this. If not, it will cost you." **MI**



Tim Smithe

CREATIVE TIPS FROM A FURNITURE RETAILER

During NASMD's closing session, Tim Smithe, chief marketing officer for Chicago-based Walter E. Smithe Furniture — one of the nation's leading furniture retailers — offered outside-the-industry tips on igniting marketing creativity. Here are a few.

I've got something for you to try at home. This is helpful in terms of advertising.

We took every print ad out of newspapers and magazines and taped them on our conference room wall. We took sticky notes and covered up every logo — about 22 ads. I brought in a group of my staff and a group of Chicagoans and had them try to guess which ad was which.

No one could tell the difference. Every furniture store ad had a pretty picture of furniture, a logo, store location and hours.

I challenge you to do the same thing at home. You can even do this with online

competitors. Print everything out, put it on the wall and cover up the logos.

If you don't stand out as unique and different, you need to think about changing your advertising.

Chicago didn't buy their TVs to watch our commercials. If we're going to bust into people's living rooms, we might as well make them smile.

We use pop culture to keep ourselves current. Link yourself to something that's hot, and you'll keep your advertising messages fresh.

In Leo Burnett's playbook he always

said, "Find a face and make that face the face of the product or the face of the store." He invented Tony The Tiger. There's another tip you can take back home. Make yourself the face of your company.

We just spent a lot of money redoing our web page. We did it about three years ago, but couple of months ago it already looked tired and out of date.

As much as it killed me, I could have run a whole flight of TV ads, but I put that money into redesigning our website from the ground up. And it was worth it. It's a bigger and bigger player. **MI**



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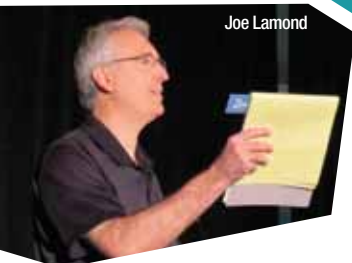
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Joe Lamond

WHY WE LOBBY

“Lobby to demand music education is funded.”

Joe Lamond, NAMM’s president and CEO, gave school music retailers a call to action on lobbying for music education by stating an obvious, but largely overlooked fact.

“In many ways, education is a government program,” Lamond said during his NASMD presentation. “And music and arts education is a subset of that is a government program. If you can possibly think about it in that way, it might change how we decide our end zone. Our end zone is to keep that government program strong. Now, for all the right reasons. Our vision is pure — that more kids will have access to music education. But the purpose of lobbying and advocacy is to support a gov-

ernment program. And that’s at the federal level, the state level and the local level.

“The idea of advocating and lobbying is to demand that this program stays strong, find its space, doesn’t get carved out, doesn’t become an after-school option or zero period program.”

Lamond said while legislators seem to value music and arts education, competing educational agendas crop up that threaten funding.

“Right now it’s STEM — Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. That’s the big push in Congress now. They say that’s [what is needed for] the 21st century job. So, now there is the STEAM caucus, adding ‘A’ for the arts.”

Noting that more than \$563 billion was spent on education in 2013, Lamond said, “We want to be part of that. Within the education system are lots of competing needs. We need to be in that game, relentlessly, to make sure that’s supported.”

He said there are a variety of ways for retailers to get involved, including:

- Order free “Why Play Music” brochures and supportmusic.org luggage tags to hand out to your area’s stakeholders.
- Join the supportmusic.com coalition.
- Contact NAMM to consider going to a NAMM Fly-In lobbying event in Washington, D.C.
- Lobby your city and state government officials. **MI**

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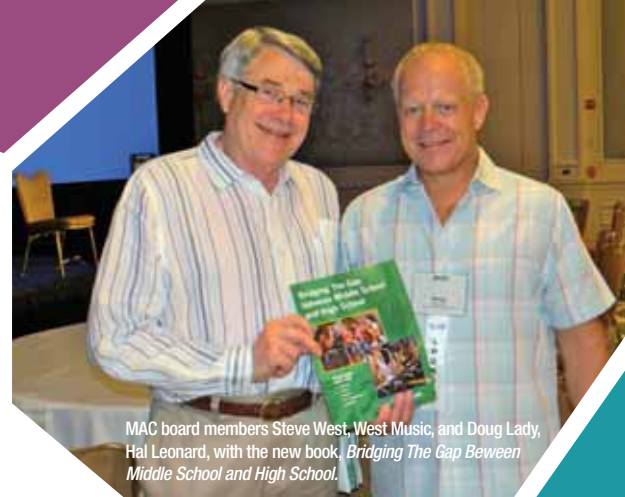
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MAC BRIDGES THE GAP



MAC board members Steve West, West Music, and Doug Lady, Hal Leonard, with the new book, *Bridging The Gap Between Middle School and High School*.

The Music Achievement Council has created a new publication to help stakeholders in music education get more middle school music students to make that jump into high school music programs.

Entitled *Bridging The Gap Between Middle School and High School*, the book helps everyone from parents and students to band directors and music supervisors understand the importance of continuing music education in high school.

“Every band road sales person in this room knows that that jump between middle school and high school is beginning to become incredibly difficult to get students over that hump to stay involved and stay in music,” said Steve West of West Music,

and a MAC board member. “So, we went out and met with some of our best educators around the country, listened to what they're doing and how they're doing it. There are some incredibly inspiring areas covered here.”

The book contains research demonstrating that students in music do better in school. For example, West noted that, “A student is 53 percent more likely to graduate on time with more than one year of music in high school.”

Also, students with more than one year of high school music education have a 14 percent higher grade point average than those with none, and a 10 percent higher GPA than those students with under one year in music education. **MI**

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WINNING IDEA—USING GOOGLE DRIVE

During a session called “Best Ideas for Ed Reps,” moderated by Summerhays Music’s Cris Behrens, the winning idea came from Dan Magan of Zeswitz Music. Magan won a new iPad courtesy of Juno Reeds. Here’s his winning idea:

“Us road reps are plagued with countless forms of communication from our teachers in this technology age.

“So why not fight technology with technology to simplify it? Using Google Drive, I was able to create forms for my teachers to fill out online — from accessory and exchange orders, to repair requests.

“These forms ensure that I have all the required information to be processed, and a copy is sent automatically to me as well as the appropriate office personnel to process the request. This is then populated into a spreadsheet, which lets everyone know

the requests are received, processed, filled and out for delivery as well as offering the capability to track budgets.

“With apps available for any platform, this is easily accessible and modified and other documents like flyers, promotions, contracts and accessory lists can be uploaded for easy access, and I can restrict who has access. This can even be embedded into your store’s website to help increase traffic as well as offering access for teachers in those districts that restrict Google Mail/Drive access.

“If you are interested, I have created a sample drive with tutorial with video demos that can be copied and modified to fit your needs. Feel free to contact me, dan@zeswitzmusic.com for the sample drive and for any questions.”

Happy Repping!



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PIANOS & KEYBOARDS

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PROGRESSIVE RECOVERY: TODAY'S PIANO INDUSTRY

By JOHN JANOWIAK

PianoForte Chicago's showroom.

As the economy moves forward, three major players reflect on the state of today's piano industry and where it's headed.

In his 2009 *Music Inc.* feature, "What Went Wrong with the Piano Industry," veteran piano retailer and *Music Inc.* regular columnist Greg Billings described the state of the piano market in cataclysmic terms: "Coming off the worst year any of us can remember, with unit sales of new pianos plummeting and dealerships closing, we may be standing at the precipice of the end of the modern piano dealer."

Harsh words, but back then, in the middle of the Great Recession and on top of already slowing sales, Billings wasn't alone in his dire outlook.

So five years later, what has changed?

We thought it would be a good time to check in with a few key suppliers and ask their views on the current state of the piano and keyboard industry.

In this piece, they describe their efforts to address the challenges of the post-recession era. While many difficulties remain, it's possible that the precipice may start looking a little less perilous.

KAWAI

"It's no secret that the piano industry got slammed by the recession," said Brian Chung, senior vice president of Kawai America Corp. "I think most of my colleagues on the supply side would say this has been the most challenging time of our careers. Sales dropped by 40 percent or more. Many dealers closed. Most of the small piano suppliers who had entered in the early 2000s disappeared. It's been a prototypical shakeout in our industry."

However, Chung said Kawai re-tooled and found ways to stay profitable while business was tough.

"Everyone hoped things might begin to bounce back in 2011, 2012 and 2013, but it's been a constant series of fits and starts — two steps forward and two steps backwards. I guess you could describe the last five years in the piano industry by saying, 'The world is flat.'"

According to Chung, this past spring is first time Kawai has seen an uptick that appears steady.

"But after many years of feeling like Charlie Brown when Lucy says she'll hold the football for a kick, I'm tired of being suckered by the economy," Chung said. "When people ask me if the recovery is finally happening, I tell them, 'Ask me next year.'"

Despite the downturn, Kawai never stopped improving and innovating. The company introduced a new line of grand pianos in 2009 and 2013, new uprights in 2014, and a steady stream of digital piano introductions throughout the past five years.

"Even though our digital pianos have



Kawai's K300 Silver

fares well during the downturn, we haven't made any shift in emphasis to favor the digital direction," Chung said. "The acoustic piano business has taken hits — but it's not going away. Kawai is committed to steady development and improvement across all our lines, acoustic and digital. This is our DNA, and it's not likely to change."

MARKET DEVELOPMENT

One aspect Kawai focused on to help dispell the tough sales was developing its market.

"Piano Manufacturers Association International (PMAI) was committed to the advancement of Recreational Music Making (RMM) before the recession began and has continued that commitment steadily ever since," Chung said. "We have partnered with Music Teachers National Association to provide RMM teacher training days at the national conferences. We've received grants from NAMM to help us underwrite some of the costs for teachers who want to attend these training events."

This year, Kawai sponsored the RMM Teaching Studio Fellowship by providing free digital pianos to young teachers (under 30 years old) who are committed to launching RMM programs in their home cities.

"Fostering RMM programs among teachers has been a slower process than we anticipated," Chung admits. "But progress has been steady, and we're gaining traction among the next generation of young teachers who see RMM as a great opportunity to expand their outreach beyond the traditional achievement-based student. We know that the piano industry needs more music makers, and RMM continues to be a sensible way to make that happen."

"I gave up being a prognosticator years ago. But it's doubtful that we ever will return to the kind of high-flying industry numbers we saw in the late 1990s. If our new normal settles midway between where we were then and where we are now, I think most of us in the business would be pretty happy."

YAMAHA

"There was a downturn for the industry, but most of this was from a group of buyers that, we believe, didn't represent the normal piano customer," said Paul Calvin, vice president and general manager of the

keyboard division. "Before the recession, there were many consumers who purchased pianos to put in upscale new homes. For the most part, these buyers disappeared when the bubble burst. We have always



Yamaha's NU1

considered this group ancillary to the core buyer who truly wants to learn how to play, or to provide lessons for their children."

Calvin said when it comes to Yamaha's core audience, there was some slowdown, but he wouldn't consider it a precipice, or the end of the modern piano dealer.

"Frankly, sales have rebounded quite nicely — for Yamaha and for our dealers," Calvin said. "Our experience is that Yamaha dealers have become much better at managing their business financially, have trimmed unneeded expenses, made their inventory turn better, and have moved to more cost-effective promotions. They have learned to weigh the market, to make sure they have a solid message for Web-savvy prospects, who tend to know all about the products even before they enter the store."

Calvin believes the piano buyer is still out there, but the buyer demands a better value, with more versatility.

"It's our mandate to listen to the market and to our dealers, and meet the needs of this new consumer," he said.

MEETING CONSUMER DEMAND

Long before the recession started, Yamaha saw changes in customers' tastes in keyboard instruments and began to design instruments to meet these needs. Five years ago, the company began rolling out its new line of hybrid pianos — AvantGrand and NU1 — which combine aspects of both acoustic and digital pianos, expanding the capabilities of the instrument.

"These pianos have been a huge success for us, since they address changing consumer lifestyle needs, as well as the

needs of a growing number of educational institutions," Calvin said.

This product launch is just an example of a new direction for Yamaha, known as the Total Piano Project, Calvin said.

"In short, our research team reassessed every aspect of our piano product and marketing strategy, and came to the conclusion that consumers didn't make clear distinctions between acoustic pianos, digital pianos and other electronic keyboards. In fact, they considered them all to be 'pianos.'"

According to Calvin, this discovery led to a formal collaboration between Yamaha's acoustic piano and digital engineers that resulted in the AvantGrand. It also brought about a major restructuring of Yamaha's entire U.S. piano sales and marketing team centered on how to best serve this new consumer. The piano division was renamed the keyboard division, and now oversees a wide range of keyboard products.

"I think it's important to acknowledge that some consumers want to buy a traditional acoustic upright piano, but others want something more versatile," Calvin said. "In fact, many want an instrument that has authentic touch and tone but has the flexibility to connect to Web-enabled devices and can be played with headphones for the ultimate privacy. This is what is offered in our Hybrid pianos, SilentPianos and the TransAcoustic Piano which was launched at the recent NAMM Show."

"We create software that enables our instruments to connect seamlessly with a wide range of popular devices our customers use everyday — iPads, computers and Android devices — so that our instruments' value as both a performance and educational tool is enhanced exponentially. Many now are able to have top performances in their own home through DisklavierTV complete with video, audio and their Disklavier play live."

Simultaneously, Yamaha has successfully launched the Disklavier Education Network. This network enables schools around the world to collaborate with one another on the instruments, share piano files and resources, and conduct master classes over the Internet.

"Yamaha's goal is to strive for seamless connectivity, and to make the technology almost invisible, so students and teachers can focus on inspiring one another," Calvin said.

ROLAND

According to Brian Alli, vice president of sales for Roland Corp. U.S. piano dealers and wholesalers alike have faced major changes over the past few years.

“How consumers educate themselves has changed, how they buy has changed, and the impact of this varies depending on the market niche,” Alli said. “The piano business is certainly in transition.”

Alli likened the transition to the accomplishments and contributions of veteran music retailer Paul Ash and the Ash family.

“Ash found new ways to make money when old ways stopped working,” Alli said. “They reinvented their retail store over and over again until they found ways to keep going and continue that practice today, as do many dealers.”



Roland's F-20

HONING THE MESSAGE

Alli said Roland has been working to change the retail experience and bring its piano line into the spotlight by embracing the demands of today's buyers.

“They embrace digital technology, and they are content hungry,” Alli said. “[So we] provide add-ons like Wi-Fi connectivity and apps, and the customers are even happier.”

Roland Foresta is a specially prepared in-store space for selecting and trying out Roland's digital pianos. The company launched the Foresta retail concept in partnership with 42 of its top dealers to begin changing Roland's presence in the U.S. market on a national level.

“By partnering with our dealers to bring a common look, message, and expectation to prospective buyers, Roland's retail message has become more consistent and is evolving into a model for superior customer service,” Alli said. “This concept is a work in progress, but by working with our dealer network, we are making great strides together.”

“Customers can shop for any product

from just about anywhere in the world online, so doing things the old way isn't without consequence, and changing with the times brings great opportunities. We will continue to work with our dealers to stay at the front end of the piano market's transformation.”

According to Alli, Roland's piano business is off to strong start this year, well ahead of 2013. “We believe our product development, marketing and market development are all paving the way to a bright future for Roland's piano dealers.” **MI**



Gist Piano Center's Foresta room.

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CASIO

SELLING THE ELECTRONIC KEYBOARD

BY KATIE KAILUS

AS ELECTRONIC KEYBOARDS CONTINUE THEIR REIGN AS KING OF THE KEYS, A FEW TOP RETAILERS SHARE THEIR SELLING TIPS WHEN IT COMES TO THE ELECTRONIC MARKET.



LESSON LEAD-IN

CATHY McREYNOLDS, OWNER
LACEFIELD MUSIC
ST. LOUIS

BEST SELLER:

KAWAI ES7 IN THE UPPER RANGE AND THE CASIO PRIVIA 150 AND KAWAI ES100 IN THE LOWER-PRICED RANGE.

"We always have the customer play the product by trying our first week of the Lacefield Adult Piano program. We sell electronic keyboards from the viewpoint that if they take our adult classes they will learn how to play the piano. Our class program is named '88playpiano' and we wrote the first classes back in 1996.

"After years of tweaking and hard work it's finally so successful and easy that anyone can play the piano quickly. We show them the class and, with an 88-note keyboard purchase, they get their lessons free. We teach them in a group, and it's incredible. They usually upgrade if they bought the smaller instruments and get a full-size piano, digital or grand. We rarely sell to a professional because we don't carry the workstation products, only all of the Kawai home products and Casio's Privia and Celviano products. We market the keyboards through the classes. We believe that if you build a piano player, you can build a customer."

CASH CLINICS

SCOTT TWIBELL, SALES MANAGER
MUNCIE MUSIC CENTER
MUNCIE, IND.

BEST SELLER:

YAMAHA PSR E-343 AND CASIO PRIVIA PX-15

"We try to hold three recitals each year during the school year. We also host at least one clinic, as well. On Saturdays during the month of December, we invite our students to play holiday-themed music live on our stage with the newest digital piano's available. This also raises the interest of parents and grandparents who usually attend. We provide refreshments and answer questions about our new instruments."





MARKETING MADNESS

KYLE KJENSrud, GENERAL MERCHANDISING MANAGER
MADISON, WIS.

BEST SELLER:

THE NORD STAGE 2 AND ROLAND AIRA PRODUCTS ARE CURRENTLY IN HIGH-DEMAND. WE ALSO SELL THE YAMAHA CP4 REGULARLY.

“A large portion of our lobby is dedicated to showcasing keyboards, pianos and EDM products. The displays cover all of the areas we feel are important and we make sure that we are well stocked with the products our customers ask for the most.

“New this year, we are launching a ‘MIDI Month’ promo in May highlighting a wide range of products related to MIDI and EDM production.”

ELECTRIC EDUCATION

DANIEL MERRIAM, RETAIL SALES MANAGER
MERRIAM MUSIC
OAKVILLE, ONTARIO

BEST SELLER:
KAWAI ES100 STAGE PIANO

“At the start of every school year we take all new staff on a tour of the building which includes a full education on some of the different products that we sell and an overview of the [latest] technology available.

“Lately, we have been spending more time in the digital piano and keyboard department since the majority of our new teachers, technicians, and sales representatives are new to the digital world of music and some of the advancements that have been made over the past 5-10 years. We find that most don’t understand how digital pianos and keyboards work, or how certain brands and models can last longer than others. This little bit of education has gone a long way. We are now starting to see some of these same teachers actively promoting our digital department to their student base and even participating in the sale.”



SUCCESSFUL SETUP

LESLIE FALTIN, OWNER
INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC CENTER
TUCSON, ARIZ.

BEST SELLER:
YAMAHA PSRE343

“One thing we offer to customers to help them choose us over an online store is that we offer delivery and setup on digital pianos and keyboards. We charge \$50-\$100 for this service depending on where the customer is in town. This has been very successful for elderly customers, students without cars and other similar situations. The offer has made all the difference in quite a few sales.”

FOCUS:

PIANOS & KEYBOARDS



YAMAHA | P-255

Contemporary Classic

Yamaha's new P-255 contemporary digital piano is ideal for both home and stage use. This model boasts Pure CF Sampling from a Yamaha CFIIIS concert grand for its piano tone, responsive touch via Graded Hammer action and Synthetic Ivory Keytops designed for maximum comfort even during long playing sessions. The P-255 also offers the Live Music Toolbox with a sound boost button, panel lock mode and internal speaker on/off control for when the player wants to use only external amplification. yamaha.com

HAMMOND | A-162

True Inspiration

Hammond has released the A-162 organ, which was inspired by the company's A-100. The new A-162 features a powerful 150-W onboard sound system with a complement of five heavy duty speakers, one of which is a 15-inch woofer for rich pedal/bass tones. Its small footprint makes it ideal for smaller churches, chapels, schools, homes and studios. hammondorganco.com





ROLAND | RD-800

Roland Gets Staged

Roland's new RD-800 Stage Piano features an enhanced collection of world-class pianos, the latest weighted-action keyboard technology, a streamlined interface, and a Tone Color function.

The RD-800's logically orga-

nized panel provides a color LCD and many dedicated controls, and makes it simple to execute essential tasks, such as selecting and layering tones, setting split points and adjusting effects. rolandconnect.com



KORG | PA300

Up-to-Date Unit

Korg has debuted the Pa300, the newest keyboard in its Pa series of professional arrangers. The portable, 61-key Pa300 comes equipped with an up-to-date collection of high-quality sounds and styles, many of which have been distilled from the Pa600 and Pa900. They can quickly be called up to play along with, or for writing music. Sound selection is made easy via a color TouchView display. The onboard custom-designed amplification system consists of 2- by 13-W amplifiers that drive two loudspeakers in a bass-reflex box producing a rich listening experience. korg.com



KAWAI | MP7 STAGE PIANO

Professional Unit

Kawai's new MP7 joins the recently released MP11 Stage Piano as the newest generation of the MP series. Designed for working musicians, studios and serious hobbyists, the MP series offers tone and touch available in a portable, professional-quality stage

piano. The MP11 offers Kawai's top Harmonic Imaging XL sound technology, featuring 88-key piano sampling. Both the MP11 and the MP7 offer Harmonic Imaging XL technology and the MP7 boasts many of the same acoustic and EP sounds found in the MP11. kawaius.com



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PEAVEY | NEXT GENERATION VALVEKING SERIES

Boutique Tones

Peavey Electronics is now shipping the next generation ValveKing series tube guitar amps. The original line was created with all the attention-to-detail circuitry and tonal qualities of boutique amps but with a price point

working guitarists could afford. The next generation includes features, such as a USB-direct recording output, variable power control, Vari-Class knobs and the TSI tube-monitoring indicator. peavey.com

ON-STAGE STANDS | MIGHTY GUITAR STAND

Mighty Portable

The GS6500 Mighty Guitar Stand from On-Stage Stands is small and lightweight enough for gig bags but can handle electric, hollow body electric, semi-acoustic, dreadnaught, classical, bass and 3/4-size guitars. Its wide A-Frame design with locking stabilizer bar ensures a solid platform and the yoke depth adjusts from 3 1/5-inches to 5 1/8-inches. MSRP: \$40.99. on-stagestands.com



FENDER | ARTISAN SERIES

Fine Woods Focus

The Fender Custom Shop's new Artisan series is built to spotlight fine woods with distinctive figures, hand-rubbed and gloss finishes. The Quilt Maple-Top Stratocaster features a figured quilt maple top accentuated by a new "tiger-eye" burst finish while the Spalted Maple-Top Stratocaster's has a new "buckeye" finish. The Walnut-Top Stratocaster has a walnut top and the new "buckeye" finish. All three models feature "lipstick" pickup covers, special chrome control knobs, chrome tuners with ebony buttons and a choice of one-piece maple neck and fingerboard or rosewood fingerboard. fender.com



TECH 21 | HOT-ROD PLEXI

Hot Pedal

Hulking stacks are known to sound best at ear-bleeding levels, but Tech 21's Hot-Rod Plexi pedal painlessly transforms existing amps without pulling a muscle or mandatory rig cranking. Parts of Tech 21's all analog SansAmp technology has been incorporated to generate organic tube amp distortion characteristics. With its own level control, it can kick it up to 28dB of pre-amp boost. MSRP: \$215. tech21nyc.com



BREEDLOVE | PREMIER SERIES MANDOLIN

Mandolin Redux

Breedlove's Premier series mandolin in the F-body shape is a reinterpretation of a traditional Florentine mandolin with a retro-inspired peg head and a pronounced scroll on the bass upper bout. Its rim depth is shallower and the overall top arc is slightly compressed for a throaty sound that will appeal to bluegrass players. Like the K and O body shapes also in the series, the mandolin features a solid carved big leaf maple back and solid carved Sitka spruce top with a full gloss finish. breedlovemusic.com

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KORG | RIMPTICH TUNER

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Korg's Rimpitch tuner attaches to the sound hole of an acoustic guitar with a rubber clip, keeping it at a convenient viewing angle while being more discrete than a clip-on tuner. It features a high-visibility LED and a Piezo pickup. korg.com

ERNIE BALL | M-STEEL ELECTRIC GUITAR STRINGS

Unstoppable Alloy

The M-Steel Electric Guitar Strings are Ernie Ball's loudest, most expressive strings yet, providing increased output, frequency, response and strength. Short for "managing steel" — an extremely strong alloy — the strings are comprised of Ernie Ball's patented Super Cobalt alloy wrapped around a managing steel hex core, producing a fuller tone and powerful low-end response. ernieball.com



RECORDING KING | 10 SERIES

Solid Choice

Recording King's new 10 Series offers players the benefits of all-solid tone-woods in a great-sounding, low-key package. The 10 series guitars are available in four body shapes to cover every player and any style of music, including the Single 0 (RP-10), pictured here, which features a great sounding small body based on a traditional design. MAP: \$399.99. recordingking.com



RADIAL ENGINEERING | SB-15 TAILBONE

Catch the Bug

The Stagebug SB-15 Tailbone from Radial Engineering is a high performance signal buffer designed to sit at the beginning of the signal chain and drive multiple pedals without the noise that plagues high impedance circuits. The discrete design reduces the need for phase-canceling negative feedback and it's able to drive multiple pedals distances of 15 meters without noise. radialeng.com





COLLEGE GUITARS | COLLEGIATE LICENSED GUITARS

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College Guitars and SHS International have teamed up to design, manufacture and distribute collegiate licensed guitars and accessories. Each of the first 100 guitars for each school includes a "Diploma of Authenticity" and

will be imprinted with sequential numbering. The guitars are a 39-inch, full-size concert steel string with a resin injected rosewood fingerboard that's resistant to low humidity and temperatures. MAP: \$199.95. collegeguitars.com

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MAXON | FUZZ ELEMENTS

Brave the Elements

Maxon's seven new Fuzz Elements pedals reproduce the classic and unique sounds of vintage Fuzz pedals. Using modern software technology, Maxon modeled and mapped the complex elements that make up the

core sounds of the units, reproducing them using advanced analog circuitry. Each model features a compact, diecast enclosure, LED status indicator and true bypass switching. maxonfx.com



RTS | RP-1000

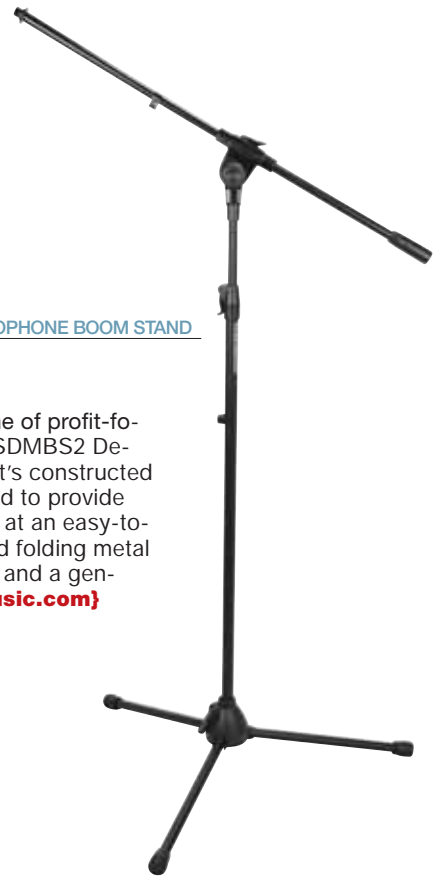
True Colors

RTS' new PR-1000 series is the newest member of its color display key panel family. The 32-position RP-1032 has an modular design that fits into any broadcast control room or truck application and features full-color, high-contrast HD TFT display with high-efficiency LED backlighting. rtsintercoms.com

STRUKTURE | SDMBS2 DELUXE MICROPHONE BOOM STAND

Profit Boom

Strukture has expanded its line of profit-focused stands with the new SDMBS2 Deluxe Microphone Boom Stand. It's constructed with heavy duty steel and crafted to provide the highest level of functionality at an easy-to-sell price. It features a reinforced folding metal tripod base, standard threading and a generous boom arm. strukturemusic.com



FENDER | PASSPORT AUDIO SYSTEMS

Passport, Please

Fender Audio has added three new portable audio systems to its Passport line. The Conference weighs 30 lbs. and is ideal for applications, such as sporting and worship events, small clubs and coffeehouses. It features 175 watts of Class-D power through 5.25-inch woofers. The Event system with bluetooth lends itself towards medium-sized audiences and features 375 watts of Class-D power through two 8-inch Fender Special Design speakers. Lastly, the Venue is fit for DJ and band gigs and features 600 watts of output power and an integrated 10-channel mixer that lets users mix lecture panels, musical ensembles and more. fender.com

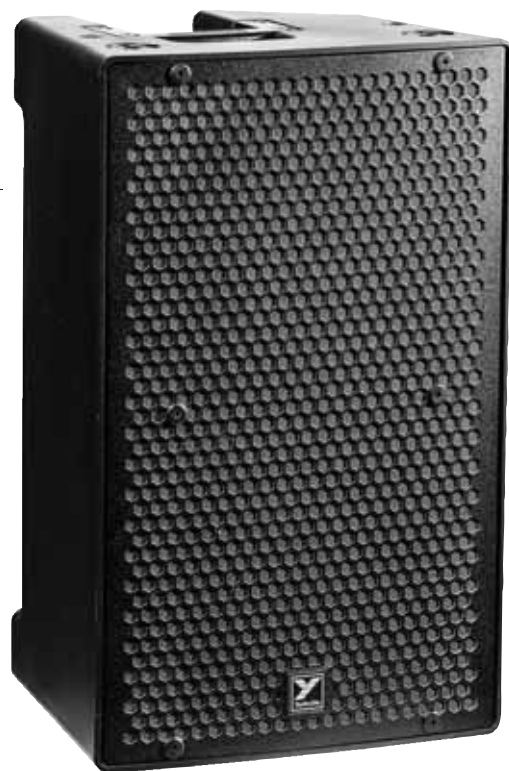




YORKVILLE SOUND | PARASOURCE SERIES

Reliable Loudness

Yorkville's ParaSource series loudspeakers deliver superior performance in point source configurations. The cabinets are built with high impact ABS cabinet construction and the large conical horns deliver improved constant directivity and midrange response. yorkville.com



TC ELECTRONIC | NATIVE LOUDNESS METERS

Keep Track

The new LM2n and LM6n loudness meter plugins from TC Electronic include a mix of new features while the LM1n is a brand new plug-in. The LM2n and LM6n, almost identical except in channel format compatibility and logging, have new dedicated settings for Max Momentary or Max Short Term Loudness display. Meanwhile, the LM1n displays the paramount numbers for program loudness, and either loudness range, max short term loudness or sliding loudness as well as true-peak clipping instantly. tcelectronic.com



DPA MICROPHONES | D:FINE HEADSET MICROPHONES

Move Freely

DPA's new d:fine 66 and 68 Headset Microphones are ideal for broadcast productions or vocalists who need to move freely. The new mics combine the flexible mechanics of DPA's modern d:fine ear mount solution with the sound qualities of the 4066 Omni and 4088 Cardioid headsets. dpamicrophones.com

LATIN PERCUSSION | ORIGINAL BONGOS

The 'OG' Bongos

Latin Percussion is celebrating its 50th anniversary with the reintroduction of the first set of bongos produced by LP. A replica of the set first crafted by LP founder Martin Cohen, each set of Original Bongos is a recreation of the satin mahogany drums, complete with original 1964 head graphics, natural raw-hide heads and special commemorative badge. MSRP: \$479. lpmusic.com



GROVER PRO | HEADLESS TAMBOURINE

Professional Percussion

Grover Pro Percussion has added a professional headless tambourine. The instrument is ideal for studio recording, but it has the cut, articulation, and distinctive full-bodied sound that critical for live performance, as well. The tambourines feature hand-hammered German silver and phosphor bronze alloy jingles, dual-width staggered jingle slots, and soft rubber comfort edging. MSRP: \$132. groverpro.com



DREAM CYMBALS | ENERGY SERIES

Responsive & Bright

Dream Cymbals' Energy 17-inch crash is a responsive, fast and bright crash. Like all Energy series cymbals, the bell is left unlathed giving it power at high volume levels while remaining musical. This cymbal fills out the Energy series and mixes perfectly with the 16- and 18-inch models. dreamcymbals.com

INNOVATIVE PERCUSSION | CHRISTOPHER LAMB ORCHESTRAL SERIES

Colorful & Clever

The Christopher Lamb Orchestral series xylophone mallets from Innovative Percussion are constructed with individually engineered custom-molded cores that feature varying weights specific to each model, strategically placed in either the top or center of the mallet head. This creates optimum feel, balance and sound. The series lets players experience the colorful, clever side of the xylophone's character, as well as its cutting edge, powerhouse presence required in a concert hall. innovativepercussion.com





GIBRALTAR | POCKET PRACTICE PAD

Practice Makes Perfect

The new Pocket Practice Pad from Gibraltar is a portable pad built on a steel platform base with a natural gum rubber playing surface. The pad has a sleek, dark gray durable finish that resists wear and tear. The pad also includes a 22-inch Velcro leg strap that fits snugly to the leg. The base of the pad is comprised of non-skid rubber ideal for table-top practice as well as leg-mounted playing. MSRP: 4-inch pad, \$33.99; 6-inch pad, \$45.99. gibraltarhardware.com



DRUMFIRE | DHB6500

Handle With Care

Drumfire's newest hardware bag is the DHB6500, which can handle all the hardware from a standard 5-piece kit with ease. Up to eight stands or mounts fit into its large foam-lined main compartment, which boasts a collapsible divider to help organize and protect hardware. Constructed of padded Cordura nylon material, the bag also features a rigid polymer reinforced spine with wheels and an integrated handle for easy transport. onstagestands.com



Innovative Percussion Inc.

New Concert Products 2014



Christopher Lamb Orchestra Series - Xylophone Mallets

- Custom-molded cores
- Varying weight specifications
- Individually engineered
- 9 models to suit your specific performance needs



Pius Cheung Series - Marimba Mallets

- Rubber cores
- Alpaca-blend yarn
- 6 models of varying hardness
- Rattan handles
- Extreme dynamic range

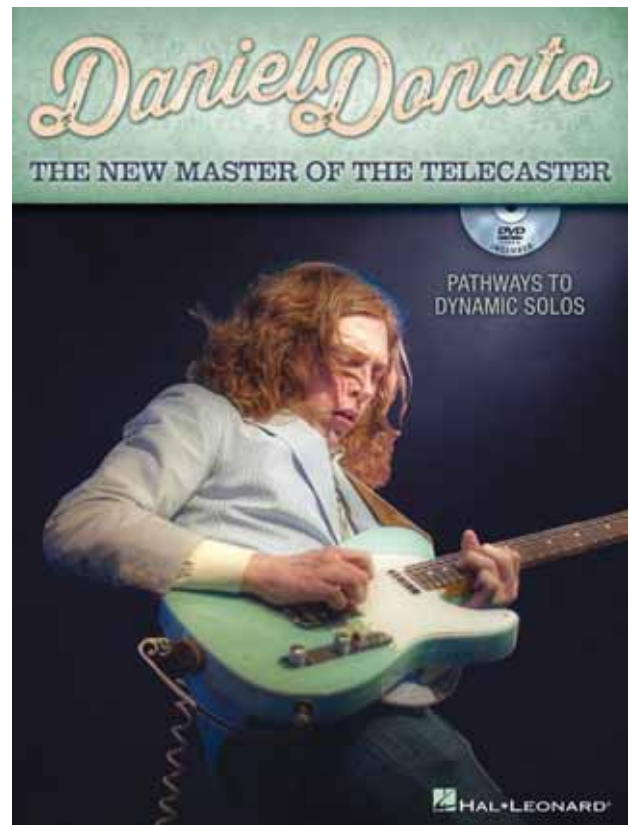


Casey Cangelosi Series - Marimba Mallets

- Environmentally-friendly bamboo cord
- Birch dowels with natural finish
- 4 different timbres available
- 2 softest models also available in soft yarn



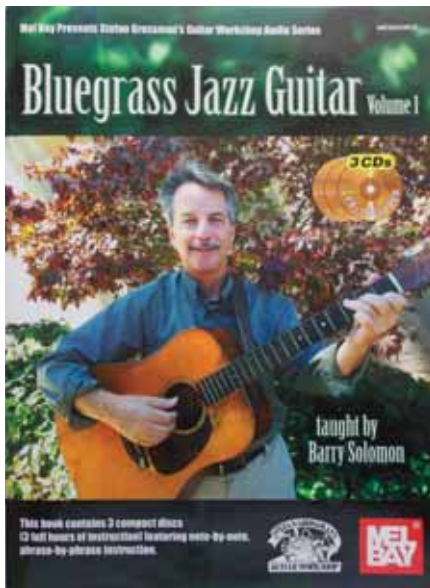
WE... ARE... INNOVATIVE **IP**



HAL LEONARD | 'DANIEL DONATO: THE NEW MASTER OF THE TELECASTER'

Lessons From Wunderkind

After picking up the guitar at age 12, Daniel Donato dove into Nashville's country scene and developed his own unique style. The new book/DVD pack, *Daniel Donato: The New Master of the Telecaster*, includes guitar lessons from 19-year-old Donato which feature his unique "pathway" concept, which opens players' minds and fingers for fretboard freedom, increased music theory comprehension and dynamic solos. halleonard.com



MEL BAY | 'BLUEGRASS JAZZ GUITAR'

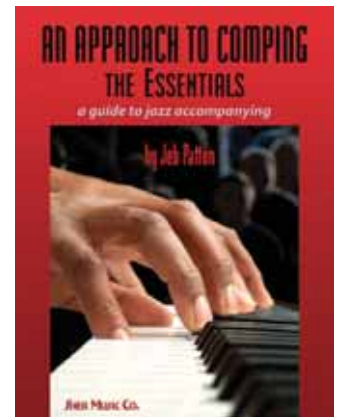
Bluegrass On My Mind

In Mel Bay's *Bluegrass Jazz Guitar Volume 1*, guitarist Barry Solomon teaches players to meld bluegrass and jazz for a unique and challenging style. The three CDs hold three hours of note-by-note instruction for classic songs including "Lady Be Good" and "Georgia On My Mind." melbay.com

SHER MUSIC CO. | 'AN APPROACH TO COMPING: THE ESSENTIALS'

Pro-Partner

Written by New York pianist Jeb Patton, *An Approach To Comping: The Essentials* is a comprehensive book from Sher Music Co. covering how to accompany jazz soloists with supportive, propulsive "comping." The book starts with basic comping patterns and then uses transcriptions of the masters including Horace Silver and Bud Powell. shermusic.com



ALFRED | DIY SERIES

DIY Unlimited

The digital age generation will appreciate the release of the DIY series for ukulele, rock guitar, guitar, keyboard and drum set. The series offers interactive streaming content to complement each lesson in the book. Lessons are easy to follow with corresponding video lessons and accompaniments are available to stream or download on any computer or mobile device. alfred.com



STANTON | SCS.4DJ MIXSTATION

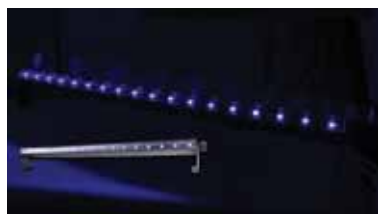
Updated Operation

Stanton has released Version 5.0 of the SCS.4DJ USB Mixstation. The latest version of the SC-IX operating system is available as a free download and brings several new features including enhanced analysis, time rift mode, FLAC supports and improvements in library size and looping. stantondj.com

AKAI PROFESSIONAL | MPX16

Deluxe Sample

The MPX16 from Akai Professional is an advanced sample player with onboard sound recording. It plays and records .WAV samples with SD cards for reliable performance in live and studio applications. The 16 velocity sensitive, illuminated pads let users play back samples in real-time and the built-in stereo microphone lets users capture sounds on-the-fly. akaipro.com



CHAUVET DJ | SLIMSTRIP UV-18 IRC

Eco-Friendly UV

Powered by 18, 3-watt LEDs, Chauvet DJ's new SlimSTRIP UV-18 IRC is a high-output, eco-friendly alternative to standard 48-inch florescent tube UV fixtures.

It produces a bright UV glow and the wash fixture can be operated remotely with the optional remote in addition to being run with DMX control. chauvetdj.com



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>>>

Kevin Damm

Damm Music
Wichita, Kan.

We just had an opening. I don't have openings very often because we have really good retention, but one thing I did was make what I thought was a pretty attractive help wanted flyer and hung it up at the local university. We put it in the music department, and we put it all over campus.

I also gave people the ability to apply on our website. The people who actually came into the store were better candidates and actually wanted the job. There were a bunch of applications online, but I thought, "I'm going to wait to hear from these people." And most of them I never heard from again. There were two or three people who didn't do anything online, they just came into the store. The guy I ended up hiring was one of those.

Personality is number one, which is why we didn't just put flyers in the music department. We can teach them about features and benefits of products, we can't teach them to be friendly, outgoing and personable.

>>>

Paul Decker

Music Villa
Bozeman, Mont.

I usually don't have to worry about hiring people because most of my guys always stay.

To keep my guys here, I try to give them the power to make their own calls and judgments and to be their own boss of their area. My guys have full reign here to do whatever they want, but they each have specific job descriptions and then we also work on everything together as a whole.

I don't know if I've ever done an interview, actually. Everyone I've hired has just been from talking with people, or you start to get to know your customers and all of a sudden they're looking for a job.

But the biggest thing I'd look for is personality — people who can work with customers. Happy, positive people. I would know that person has some musically related skills, but I would hire on the positive attitude first of all and as they start to work either switch them around to another area or maybe they'll advance in that area.



>>>

Carol Cook
The Music Room
Palatine, Ill.

How do you **hire** great staff?

I keep a link on my website for employment opportunities for both floor and teaching staff.

The questions are education specific for the teachers, but both of the applications include problem solving questions. For example, every once in a while in our industry, we'll have two students show up at the same time for a lesson — which I hate — but it happens! One of my questions is, "What are you going to do in this situation? How are you going to take care of this and solve the problem to the best of your ability so everyone is satisfied?"

The teacher application is much more extensive. In addition to the questions,

they have to submit a sample goal plan.

It's not experience that draws me to an applicant. That's lower on my list. One of the things that's most important to me is the applicant needs to be able to communicate really clearly. No matter what you're doing, if you're teaching, repairing instruments or dealing with customers, you have to be able to communicate. I always tell the staff, the world's problems can be solved with really excellent communication.

I make them do a lot of writing on these applications, and some people write better than others. But it's an important part of the process, are they able

to communicate?

In the interview, I do some more problem solving scenarios and they have to give me the answer right away. I look at all kinds of things like eye contact and the ability to listen.

Once they're hired, I provide them with a ton of materials. I'm extremely meticulous. I have a company guidebook which is partly mundane — where to park — but it's also on how to communicate. How do we phrase things? How do we deal with different customers? We also use an online notetaking site called Evernote. It's wonderful for us — we're able to organize our different training materials into different notebooks. **MI**

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