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JULY 2015
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REVAMPED GROWTH

How the new management of Cream City Music has put the retailer back on the map

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RPMDA

Full 2015 convention coverage

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PARLOR CRAZE

The parlor market picks up

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The PSR-S670 (above) is available now. You can preorder the PSR-S770 (left) and PSR-S970 (right and below) today.

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PERSPECTIVE | BY FRANK ALKYER

ALL PRAISE THE JEWOPS

Mentors in this industry come from all walks of life, all styles of management. And if you were lucky enough to work in the drum industry during the last four decades, chances are good that some of your mentors were a triumverate of friends who jokingly called themselves the JEWOPS — Junior Executives Without Power.

Lennie DiMuzio, Jim Coffin and Lloyd McCausland had as much to do with the development of the drum industry as anyone ever has or ever will. They were key players at their companies — Lennie with Zildjian (and Sabian for a short time), Jim with Yamaha Corp. of America, and Lloyd with Remo.

They were also key players in the development of the Percussive Arts Society and the Percussion Marketing Council. But they also were generous with advice and a laugh, showing generations of musical products professionals how to work very hard, but have an even better time.

Lloyd McCausland and Lennie DiMuzio

Jim Coffin

We recently lost two of these men. Lennie in March and Jim in April. So, to honor all three, we reached out to a few folks to talk about the impact of the JEWOPS.

"I consider [Jim] my mentor, and the reason I have been in the industry for 30 years," said Jerry Andreas, senior vice president at SKB, who worked with Coffin at Yamaha. "[The JEWOPS'] influence changed the drum industry, and their contributions can be seen for years to come."

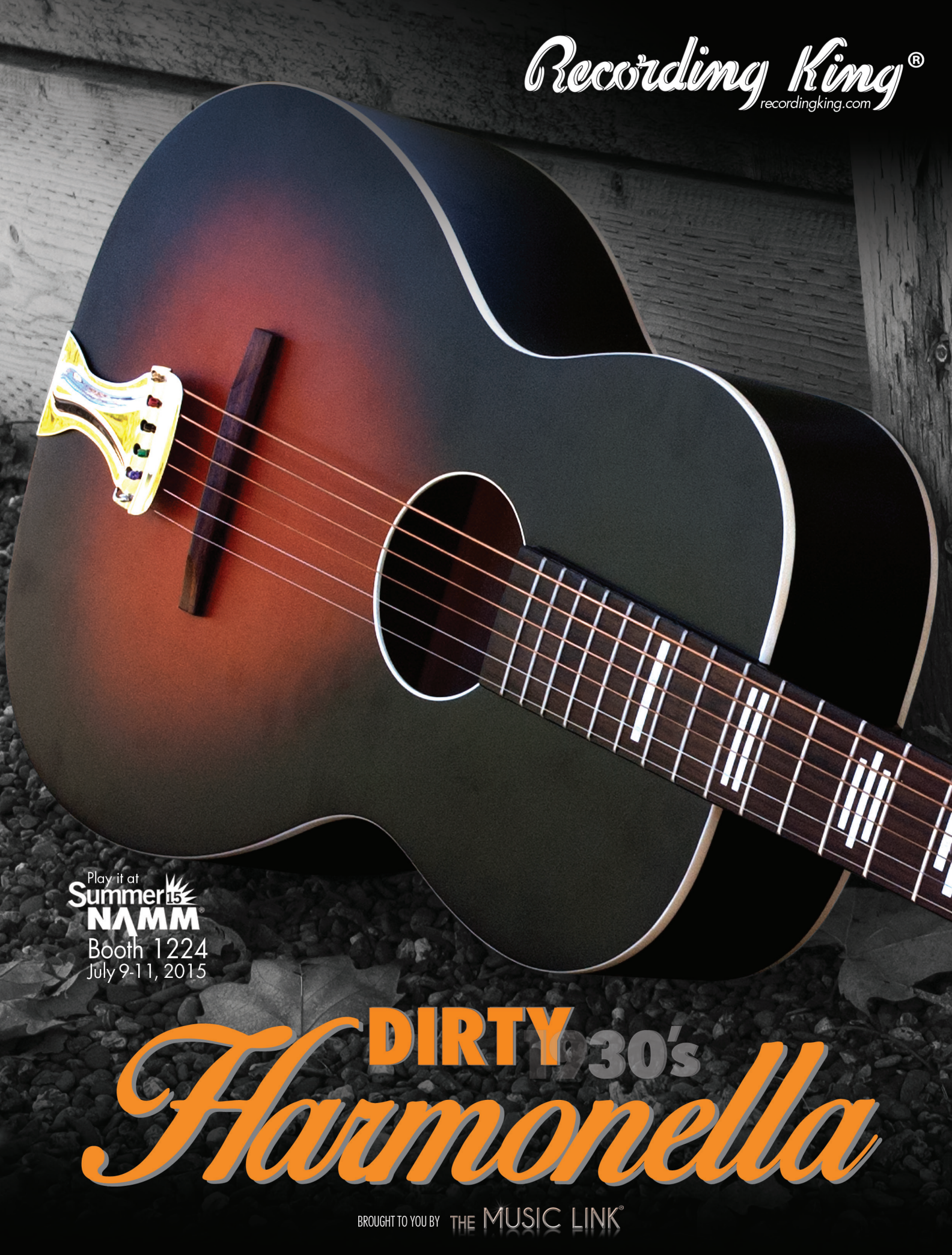
"Seeing how much Lennie, Jim and Lloyd loved what they were doing and the good humor with which they went about their business, made me realize that although I was never going to get rich working in this industry, the reward itself was having a career doing something that I loved," said Colin Scofield, vice president of sales and marketing at JodyJazz, who worked with Lennie at Zildjian.

"I would not have achieved the success that I was able to achieve in the percussion business without them," said Rick Drumm, former president of J. D'Addario & Co., who worked with Lloyd at Remo. "They were there to encourage me, and they were there to give me a smack up side of my head when I was screwing up. Of course, all with many laughs along the way."

But the true essence of the JEWOPS can only come from the remaining member.

"Yes, it was fun, but the three of us for 25 to 30 years were part of the heyday of the music industry, and we were a force behind that heyday," McCausland said. "Wouldn't you know that Lennie, under the mentorship of Armand, helped make Zildjian the No. 1 cymbal company in the world. And Jim helped Yamaha break into the American market and become a leading world choice. And under Remo's mentorship, we were able change the world's desire for a skin drumhead into a Remo Weatherking drumhead worldwide. What a force those three companies were and are."

Force indeed. And all the while, they took interest, or pity, on guys like me, showing us that it was OK to have passion for your company and industry, and have a good time at work, too. They joked about not having power, but they certainly wielded a beautiful influence. And for that, we are thankful. **MI**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LETTERS

Great Big Shout Out

Thank you *Music Inc.* for once again sharing our story! I would like to thank Yamaha, Bosendorfer, Schimmel, Samick and all of the other fine vendors that have trusted us and partnered with us to serve the music community of Southern California for the last 33 years. I'd also like to give a great big shout out to all of our employees, past and present, as we wouldn't be the company we are today without your very special gifts and talents.

Jeff Falgien
Vice President
Keyboard Concepts
Sherman Oaks, California

Piano Print Response

Thank you for the recent article "More Print, More Pianos?" As Larry Morton mentioned, the Willis Music Publishing division is primarily focused on piano. 2014 was a strong year for our John Thompson and Edna Mae Burnam brands globally. We are in a unique position being a publisher and retailer. We sell the Steinway family of products and operate lesson programs in each of our stores in addition to being full line. Lesson signups are up significantly and recitals are bigger than ever. 2015 has shown an increase in acoustic piano interest and buyers are slowly coming around. I am encouraged with the renewed interest and look forward to seeing 2015 unfold. I firmly believe that the piano market will feel the benefit in renewed interest in learning to play.

If your store is not participating in the consistency and dependability of print music — join RPMDA. We just came from our convention in Las Vegas, and it was wonderful. Next year we are in St. Louis where the association was founded, and it's the perfect opportunity to network with people who make print happen.

Kevin Cranley
President
Willis Music Company
Cincinnati, Ohio

A Milestone Achievement

Congratulations, *Music Inc.*! You have achieved a tremendous milestone in the publishing world and definitely within the music products industry. Your publication has provided consistent vital information to the music making industry and those of us that have been in this field for five decades or more. Never an issue goes by that I do not cut, clip, copy, save or forward something that is important and always relevant.

Your May 2015 anniversary issue cover says it all about the people, products and companies that you have featured and covered over the past 25 years. However, among my personal favorites, which is framed and displayed in my conference room, is the December 1994 issue cover story on The Chicago Music Mart at DePaul Center. The Music Mart was a client of Dustman & Associates for two years and your [former editors] David Zaworski and John Janowiak did a marvelous job covering the grand opening of DePaul University's five-star effort in attempting to re-create Chicago's Wabash Avenue in its retail prime. *Music Inc.* was only five years old at this time.

Like many things in this business, new entities, practices, perils and successes will come and go quickly. However, *Music Inc.* has consistently delivered the information all music products industry leaders NEED to read and learn from, for the past two and half decades. You have achieved what many no-longer-in-existence publications have only dreamed of.

Congratulations! And best wishes for another 25 years of success and readership growth. We're all in this together.

Karl Dustman
President
Dustman & Associates
Cleveland, Ohio

NAMM Takes Note

Our sincere congratulations to the Maher Publications team on achieving this [25th anniversary] milestone. Jack [Maher] would be so proud to see how you have continued to serve the industry he loved so much.

A couple of observations: Your cover stories on the newsmakers of the day demonstrate once again that our business is all about the people. Their stories are priceless and their passion for music is the glue that holds us all together. Secondly, you've clearly pointed out the challenge of making predictions. A few have been eerily accurate while most have been hilariously wrong. I guess that's what keeps so many of us in the industry for life, we're just eager to see how it all works out!

Joe Lamond
President & CEO
NAMM
Carlsbad, California

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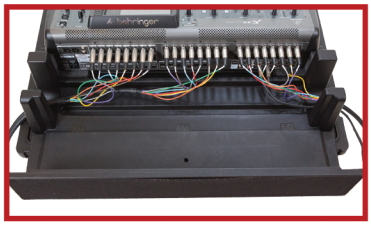

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RETAIL

SPICER'S MUSIC | BY JOHN JANOWIAK

POWER OF INSTRUCTION

In less than three years, Spicer's Music has grown dramatically. Back in December 2012, the Auburn, Alabama-based combo dealership placed an initial stock order of $23,000. But the small upstart has expanded its inventory 595 percent in just two years, with now more than $160,000 worth of gear. In 2014, Spicer's has experienced a gross sales increase of more than 195 percent above 2013 sales.

"We are currently on track to match or surpass that percentage of growth in 2015," said Tim Spicer, the store's co-owner and mastermind. "We have accomplished this phenomenal growth without any outside investors and are currently debt free."

At just 26 years old, Tim Spicer has already had a big impact on the music scene in Auburn. It began with a band camp he and his brother, Corey, started out of their home nine years ago.

"We both grew up playing music, but there were not really any avenues for us to explore our musical creativity around here," Tim said. "So, we wanted to start something of our own to give youth in the area an opportunity to expand on their musical creativity and abilities."

The camp quickly caught on, and it soon outgrew the home studio. Each summer, the Spicers held the camps at a local school. From day one, they actively sought gigs for their students, and today, youth bands regularly play around town.

Tom, Tim and Corey Spicer

By the time they decided to venture into retail, the Spicer name was already well known in schools and throughout the music community in Auburn. Tim had worked at another local music store for years, and when it underwent a change of ownership, he thought it was time to launch a store of his own.

"I decided just to start from scratch," he said. "I could start with my own clean slate, a vision that I saw, and really put a stamp on the community that way."

He met with his family and talked it over. In 2012, they signed the lease on their 3,000-square-foot store the day before Thanksgiving and opened on Dec. 1.

"We didn't plan on doing a lot of retail, we planned on doing a lot of summer camps, lessons, after-school programs, that kind of stuff," Tim said. "But the retail just exploded. We had people continuously coming in and asking for higher-end guitars, pedals, amps and drum kits."

FOCUS ON TEACHING

Today, Spicer's Music is a full-line music dealer. Tim serves as the day-to-day store manager, while Corey helps out and teaches lessons while working as a full-time drummer. Their dad, Tom, is the third co-owner and also helps out at the store.

Spicer's now has 18 instructors and 330 lesson students each week, an increase of 175 percent in the past year. On site there are eight lessons studios and a stage.

Meanwhile, the band camps continue to create new customers while keeping old ones coming in. In the Garage Band Camp, players learn to play cover songs and, with the help of a professional songwriter, write and perform a song of their own. Spicer's has also introduced a praise and worship camp and an advanced camp, where Grammy-nominated producer Larry Mitchell shares insights into writing songs, recording and producing an album.

The store offers a welcoming community atmosphere where musicians of all ages can stop by, have a cup of coffee and pick up an instrument to play.

"It turns into mini jam sessions, many times among complete strangers," Tim said. "They don't meet each other and shake hands until after they've played. It turns into local bands. We encourage parents to drop off their kids just to come in and meet people."

Just shy of three years in and the store is already bursting at the seams, and Spicer has started shopping for a new location.

"We'd like to be able to do our summer camps under one roof," he said. "So, hopefully within the next year or two we'll be at a different location that would probably have to be triple or quadruple the size here." **MI**

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SWEETWATER | PHILANTHROPY

Sweetwater, Nonprofit Donate Instruments to Local Schools

Sweetwater President Chuck Surack and his wife, Lisa, recently partnered with the Fort Wayne, Indiana, nonprofit organization, Believe in a Dream, to donate 35 stringed instruments to 12 middle and high schools in the Fort Wayne community.

The instruments are estimated at a net worth of over $12,000.

Sweetwater has also donated $10,000 to support Believe in a Dream's mission to help struggling school orchestra programs by creating and promoting mass concerts involving as many as 13 schools, plus musicians from the Fort Wayne Philharmonic.

Chuck Surack (center) and Believe in a Dream board chair Jamal Robinson (to his right), plus school officials, and students holding some of the 35 donated instruments.

"I went to Wayne High School," Chuck Surack told a group of orchestra students receiving donated instruments at Northrop High School in Fort Wayne, Indiana (in a video on The Journal Gazette's website). "My music classes at Wayne are what really set me up for my life, frankly, at Sweetwater and with everything I've been able to do.

"The gift of music is so extraordinary. And when Jamal [Robinson, board chair of Believe in a Dream] came to me a couple years ago and explained the need for more instruments, I said 'I can help.' I just loved what he was doing with Believe in a Dream, and I think it's so important that we have arts, not only in school, but in the rest of our lives."

MOORE MUSIC | EVENT

MOORE MUSIC HOSTS MARTIN GUITAR EVENT

On May 11, Moore Music in Evansville, Indiana, held a Martin guitar event, featuring Jay Myer, district sales manager for C.F. Martin, and guitarist Craig Thatcher.

Attendees were treated to a video presentation chronicling Martin's 182-year history, a virtual factory tour and the opportunity to view and play a selection of more than 25 Martin guitars ranging from X-series models to one-of-a-kind custom shop, all at event-only pricing.

"It was open to the public, and we had interested buyers show up," said Rob Arnold, Moore Music's social media and public relations manager.

Following the virtual factory tour, "Craig Thatcher played some of the various Martins that we had on display, and demonstrated what a small parlor-sized guitar would sound like versus a full-size dreadnought. Then there was a Q&A, where everybody came up, played some guitars and asked questions on a one-on-one basis."

When asked whether the event brought in some residual sales, Arnold responded "There were some guys in attendance that night who are probably more inclined to do the custom-shop thing, and it got the wheels turning."

Craig Thatcher stands onstage discussing features of a Martin dreadnought with Moore Music customers.

Ed Sein, Moore Music's retail guitar shop manager, holds a Martin parlor guitar.

WARD-BRODT CHANGES STORE LOCATION

Ward-Brodt's former storefront in Madison, Wisconsin.

The site of Ward-Brodt's new Fitchburg, Wisconsin, location.

Ward-Brodt — formerly located in Madison, Wisconsin — recently moved its main location to Fitchburg, just outside the Madison city limits. The move occurred in May, following a decision of non-renewal of the store's lease. Mick Faulhaber, president of Ward-Brodt, told *Music Inc.* that the new location will facilitate a more effective use of space.

"We had already done some planning. We're going to be in a better location. It'll be much more efficient, and it gives us a chance to throw stuff away after being [at the Madison location] for 32 years."

Since opening in 1927, Ward-Brodt has had three locations throughout Madison, including its first downtown location on State St., and its second on Henry St., until 1983, when the company merged its west branch location and main downtown location to form the "Ward-Brodt Music Mall."

"It's a little smaller, but we don't need as much as we had," Faulhaber continued. "It's a higher[-ceilinged] building, so we can do more things vertically instead of having to do everything horizontally. We've also got drive-in facilities for loading and unloading our road men. So, we've got a lot of amenities, and it's more energy efficient."

The company plans to have a grand opening in July.

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GUITAR CENTER | OPENING

Guitar Center Opens Stores in California, Missouri

Guitar Center has opened two new locations — one 7,000-square-foot store in Kansas City, Missouri, plus a 9,000-square-foot store in Westlake Village, California. The grand openings took place in April.

Both stores will feature Guitar Center Lessons, an in-house lesson facility, which will create opportunities for musicians of all ages and skill levels. Guitar Center Lessons provides music lessons from beginner to advanced featuring certified instructors teaching GC curriculum for one-on-one lessons, as well as group courses.

The new locations also feature GC's on-site repair and set-up service for guitars and stringed instruments, as well as GC Rentals.

Customers will also be able to attend free classes every Wednesday and Saturday through Guitar Center workshops. These classes include introductory instruction on a variety of instruments and Recording Made Easy classes are available.

Both locations will also offer programs designed to spearhead creativity and highlight undiscovered talent, including GC's singer-songwriter program, "Drum-Off," "Your Next Record," and "Get Out of the Garage."

DIETZE MUSIC | RETIREMENT

Heckman Retires

Piano sales manager and store co-owner, Keith Heckman, ended his nearly four-decade tenure at Dietze Music in Lincoln, Nebraska, when he retired on June 6.

Prior to joining the business, Heckman owned a cleaning company. But, the retail veteran started out at Dietze Music by repairing orchestral instruments at the store's repair shop in the 1970s while he was still in college.

Hackman later joined partner, Robert Fenton, who incorporated Dietze in the '50s after the company's founder, August Dietze, had established the full line music store in Nebraska's capital city in 1927.

Dietze Music increased from a single storefront in the '90s to having four locations throughout eastern Nebraska.

"His gift was hiring people who could perform and giving them a long enough leash to do stuff," said Ted Eschliman, co-owner of Dietze Music and Music Inc. columnist. "My partner, Tim Pratt, and I really credit him with giving us the opportunity to open our second store in Lincoln back in the early '90s. Keith was very supportive. He was there to open doors."

MANTOVA'S TWO STREET MUSIC | AD CAMPAIGN

MANTOVA'S TWO STREET MUSIC RELEASES LOCALTV COMMERCIAL

Mantova's Two Street Music in Eureka, California, has released a local TV ad.

The ad was released as part of a local news channel's effort at highlighting family businesses in Humboldt County and features the owners — brothers Anthony and Matthew Mantova — alongside with their father, Lindy, speaking about the nature of their family-owned business.

"We were intrigued with the 'family angle,'" said Anthony Mantova, owner of Mantova's Two Street Music. "Advertising that we are a local business only helps us stand out from the big box stores. However, pointing out that we are also a family-owned business helps us stand out even more.

"We wondered: For the music stores that happen to be family-owned, maybe giving customers access to the family could build loyalty in a different way."

KIDDER MUSIC | CLOSING

Kidder Music Closes Sauk Valley Location

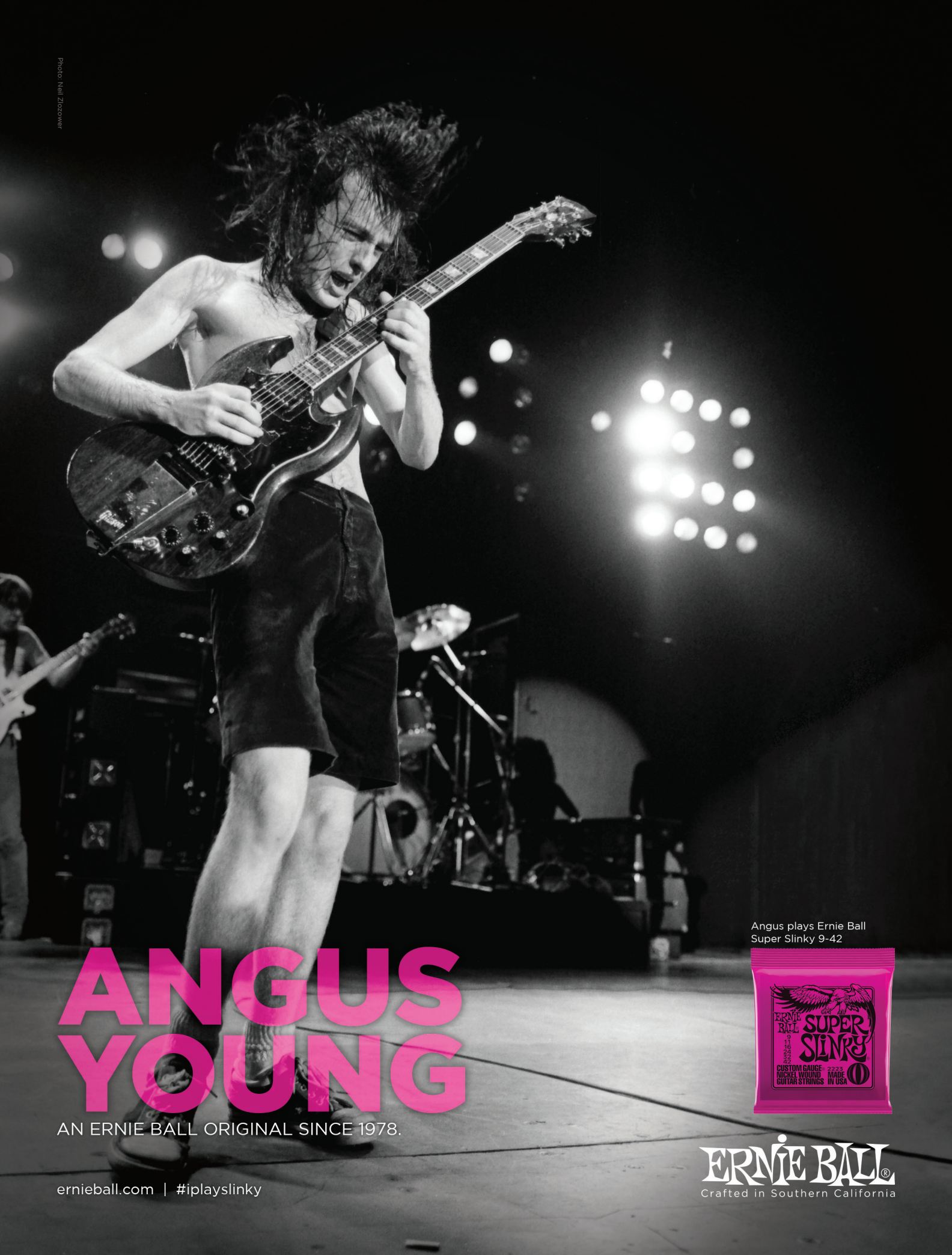
Kidder Music is closing its store in Sterling, Illinois, this summer, amidst decreased foot traffic in the Sauk Valley area.

"As manufacturing has left the Sauk Valley, the area's retail habits and economic demographics have changed dramatically over the last 10 years," Kidder Music's President, Beth Houlihan, told Sterling's Daily Gazette.

Houlihan said the company looked at other area locations before deciding to close its Sterling branch.

"Even with smaller places, the expenses go up in more active retail areas," Houlihan continued. "And with the numbers and trends we see, we just couldn't make that investment."

Photo credit: Philip Marruffo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Note From Joe

The NAMM Show—The Year's Most Productive Four Days for Exhibiting Companies

In today's world, business can be done with a click of a button. A host of technology allows us to interact with people all over the world without even leaving our homes. In many ways it would seem that the need to gather face-to-face is no longer necessary. Yet according to the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), December 2014 marked the trade show industry's 18th quarter of consecutive growth.

For hundreds of years, from the origins of trade shows in medieval times, merchants have valued the results of conducting business in a centralized location. And as people we are inherently social, seemingly built into our DNA is the need to connect and share.

As a brand leader, The NAMM Show offers the invaluable opportunity to understand industry trends, assess the full competitive landscape, find new partners and form strategic alliances. Teams from across a wide geography can meet in person to exchange ideas, develop sales and marketing skills, and engage with their customers in meaningful interactions.

So why do the world's largest companies—and emerging innovators—continue to invest in The NAMM Show? With the show's global mix of opportunities, connections and ideas, it is still the most effective place to get business done. And, as an exhibitor, this is your opportunity to spend quality time with the people who matter most to your business and connect with customers in an environment where they can see, feel and hear your products.

The Buyers

The industry's most important decision-makers travel to Anaheim each year, including a growing number of retail and corporate buyers. In 2015, NAMM's Top 100 Dealers and retailers from *The Music Trades* Top 200 Domestic Music Stores List were well-represented, and our international numbers jumped by 11 percent, with buyers from more than 100 countries in attendance. With a global retail base—including major stores and independent mom-and-pop shops—there was an estimated purchasing power of $10 billion present at the show—a consolidated sales opportunity you can't find anywhere else. Exhibiting at NAMM is definitely the most cost efficient way to reach your target audience.

The Media

The show attracts influential media outlets from around the world, offering the chance to review hundreds of full product line presentations and meet directly with executives, marketers and designers to further understand industry direction. When the likes of *Forbes, LA Times* and *LA Times Video, USA Today, Billboard, Huffington Post* and Yahoo file stories, it isn't just

The 2015 NAMM Show at a Glance

100+

Buyers From More Than 100 Countries

Exhibitors reached important decision makers from around the globe.

11%

International Attendance

Exhibitors had even more opportunities to make global connections with an 11 percent increase in international attendance this year.

84%

Top 100 Retailers

Exhibitors had the opportunity to meet with 84 percent of NAMM's Top 100 Dealers.

87%

Top 200 Domestic Retailers

87 percent of NAMM members on *The Music Trades* national Top 200 Music Stores List were present at the show.

$10 Billion+

Buying Power Present

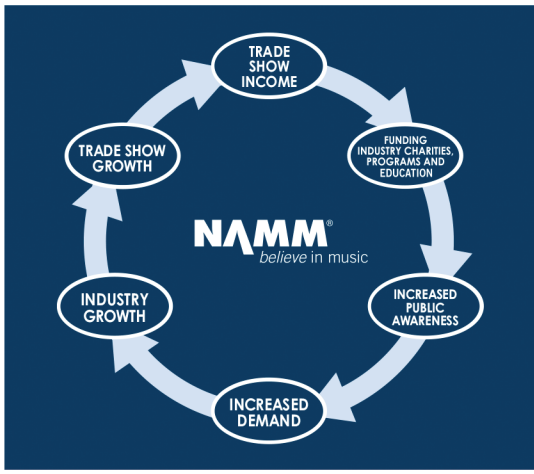
The estimated purchasing power of registered global buying companies totaled in excess of $10 billion.*

**An estimate of The 2015 NAMM Show by* The Music Trades *magazine*

Media Spotlight

The NAMM Show is attended by industry media, as well as reporters from global newspaper, TV and radio outlets, including:

USA TODAY · FOX NEWS channel · KTLA 5 · Forbes · Los Angeles News Group · The Huffington Post · Los Angeles Times · YAHOO! · CNBC · npr · REUTERS · Wall Street Journal · The Hollywood Reporter · Rolling Stone · Billboard · CNN



about the show—their editorial puts NAMM members and their products in the spotlight.

The Community

The NAMM Show can feel like a family reunion at times, with colleagues and friends united to support music making. The artists and VIPs in attendance add a vital element, shopping the show floor to see what's new and use their influence to extend brand messages to millions of fans and friends.

Being a part of The NAMM Show demonstrates your commitment to the industry and its future, as proceeds from the show are reinvested back into our industry. Our "Circle of Benefits" business model takes trade show profits and channels them back into music making and music education activities throughout the year, further increasing demand for member products and services.

Join us at The 2016 NAMM Show, January 21-24—a productive four-day experience that will set your business up for success in the year ahead!

Joe Lamond
NAMM PRESIDENT AND CEO

NAMM Advertorial is published by NAMM. To keep up-to-date on the latest breaking industry news, sign up for our *NAMM News* e-newsletter at **info@namm.org**.

Join the Conversation #NAMM

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SUPPLY

MUSICNOMAD CARE I BY KATIE KAILUS

GOOD, CLEAN GROWTH

Rand Rognlien has been developing premium cleaning and care products for the majority of his life. For fifteen years, the founder of MusicNomad Care ran his family's car cleaner company, but when his father wanted to retire they sold the business and he pursued his passion of working in the music industry.

"I've been a musician all my life and wanted to do something in music," Rognlien said. "I wanted to give back to musicians."

So, in 2008, he launched MusicNomad.com, a free online hub for independent musicians, assisting them with everything from locating the best band rehearsal spaces to finding music friendly health insurance. However, shortly after debuting the site, Rognlien decided he wanted to continue developing products, so he went back to what he knew best: cleaning and care supplies.

Now, after being on the market for just five years, MusicNomad Care, a separate entity from the musician site, has seen steady growth. Today, MusicNomad products are available in 35 countries as well as 700 stores in the United States.

"We launched our company at NAMM, and we approached a bunch of distributors, but they weren't taking on new lines because the economy was bad at that time," Rognlien said. "So, we decided to develop a program where we would call on dealers direct. Now we have hundreds independent retailers across the United States buying from us directly. We have very close relationships with them."

Rand Rognlien

In just five years, MusicNomad Care has grown to be a major player in the instrument care market

MusicNomad's product lineup has also expanded. After originally launching with 10 products, the company now offers over 30 different cleaners and cleaning accessories. It recently branched out from the guitar market, offering products for drums, band and orchestra, and keyboards as well.

"Once our customers and dealers realized we were helping them grow their instrument care business, it was a natural evolution to extend the brand name throughout store departments," Rognlien said.

Additionally, Rognlien and his team were approached by musicians who were eyeing their guitar player's cleaning products.

"They'd reach out and say, 'Man, can you make products for our instruments? Our guitar players are enthusiastic about your stuff.'"

GOTTA STOCK IT

Seventy-five percent of MusicNomad's products are manufactured in the United States and feature a strong focus on the environment, boasting eco-friendly packaging and some bio-degradable formulas. But it's the high margins, quality products and reliable dealer service MusicNomad provides that has caught the eye of retailers — and their repair shops.

"The majority of dealers who buy our products will also use them in their repair department, as well," Rognlien said.

And it's not just retail repair shops using MusicNomad Care. Many suppliers use the company's products in their manufacturing facilities, including DW Drums, Taylor Guitars, Kala and Deering.

"To have those companies use our products and trust our products in the short time that we've been around, that's really incredible," he said.

So, what does the future hold for this fast-growing company? According to Rognlien, more growth.

"We're still a smaller company, and we don't mind being small because of our passion, energy and knowledge in this category," Rognlien said. "We think we are leading the care market to where it needs to be." MI

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MUSIQUIP I DISTRIBUTION

MUSIQUIP GETS TONED

Musiquip is now the new exclusive U.S. distributor of Timber Tones, which designs and tests its guitar picks in Brighton, England. Timber Tones prides itself on being an eco-friendly manufacturer, sourcing off-cuts, waste material and bi-products wherever possible.

"We're excited by this new partnership with Musiquip, which will allow us to properly serve the American market," said Rob Wooller, company founder. "Musiquip's near decade of successful business in the U.S. — and the 35-year history of its Canadian parent company SFM — speaks to their professionalism, knowledge, and quality of service. It was a perfect match for Timber Tones."

"Timber Tones is a great fit for Musiquip," said John Kelley, Musiquip's general manager. "This is a luxury accessory brand that pairs perfectly with our other best-in-class brand partners, and will appeal to a wide array of U.S. retailers. We're excited to introduce Timber Tones to new customers on this side of the Atlantic."

{musiquip.com; timber-tones.com}

From left: Musiquip's Erik Lind, Timber Tones' Rob Woller and Musiquip's John Kelley

HAL LEONARD I ACQUISITION

Hal Acquires Tunessence

Founded in 2012 by recent Carnegie Mellon graduates, Tunessence operates a Web-based platform for interactive music lessons. The software synchronizes audio and video assets with music notation, providing a follow-along marker, looping and tempo control.

"Tunessence has made it easier for aspiring musicians to learn how to play their favorite music online," said Alexander Soto, co-founder of Tunessence. "With Hal Leonard's vast library and expertise creating music lessons, we'll be able to continue that mission on a larger scale."

Hal Leonard will use Tunessence's technology for many of its websites and upcoming digital initiatives, across all of its editorial divisions.

"Our GuitarInstructor.com website was in the midst of a major revamp, and Tunessence proved to be a first-class, tech savvy solution for taking this site to the next level," said Jeff Schroedl, Hal Leonard executive vice president. "Tunessence will be debuted within GuitarInstructor and included in many other Hal Leonard projects moving forward."

"We hoped to help a new generation of practicing musicians with Tunessence," said Matthew Bauch, Tunessence co-founder. "Hal Leonard is the perfect company to team with to make our vision come true. We're excited to see what lies ahead." **{halleonard.com}**

SHURE | ARTIST APPROVED

Shure Power ACMs

The 50th annual Academy of Country Music Awards was held April 19 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas. The event was broadcast live on CBS-TV, and featured many Shure microphones and PSMs.

The primary wireless supplier for the show was California-based ATK Audiotek. The event required more than 40 channels of wireless microphones, 26 of which were for Shure equipment, including four Axient systems. In addition, all 20 channels of in-ear monitors were exclusively Shure PSM 1000 systems. The sophisticated antenna design required was based on Soundtronics' proprietary Phoenix 8 system.

"The place is huge, and that affects a lot of things," said Dave Bellamy of wireless specialist Soundtronics, who was hired as RF coordinator.

"The two stages were 270 feet end-to-end, plus we had to provide wireless coverage in other spaces, like out in the audience and the pick-up truck stage. Fortunately, we had enough lead time to design systems that could overcome the challenges of working in that kind of space. For live TV, you have to base your wireless system design on the best equipment available. That's why we used Shure PSM 1000 for every in-ear monitor feed. No other in-ear system comes close. We also chose Shure Axient and UHF-R Series as our default wireless microphones." **{shure.com}**

Luke Bryan using a Shure mic during the 50th annual ACMs.

VATER | PRODUCT

Vater Gets a Makeover

Vater Percussion has updated its drumstick sleeve packaging. There are now six new art designs, each including a different featured image with a high-gloss UV coat finish over the Vater logo. The updated designs will also carry over in to Vater's accessory packaging. **{vater.com}**

ALVAREZ | DISTRIBUTION

ALVAREZ FINDS RHYTHM IN UKRAINE

Alvarez Guitars has partnered with Eurhythmics, the exclusive distributor in the Ukraine for more than 30 manufacturers of musical instruments and equipment. As of April, Eurhythmics has supplyed retailers in the Ukraine with Alvarez guitars and accessories.

"There's so much music in the Ukraine, we're really honored to be entering the market there," said Chris Meikle, senior vice president of St. Louis Music and Alvarez head of development."Partnering with Eurhythmics as the exclusive distributor of Alvarez Guitars is fantastic. They work with over 100 retailers and are very focused and professional, which is why they've done so well." **{alvarezguitars.com}**

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eurhythmics
РАЗОМ З НАМИ БУТИ НАЙКРАЩИМ

CAD | SALES

CAD Appoints Ludwig Marketing

CAD Audio and Astatic Commercial Products have appointed Ludwig Marketing as sales representatives for the Midwest. Ludwig Marketing is based in Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, with leading brands in the MI, pro-audio, AV installation and broadcast markets. They will represent CAD in Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska, and Astatic Commercial in the same territories except for Wyoming.

"We're excited to be affiliated with CAD Audio and Astatic," said Don Ludwig, Ludwig Marketing president. "The immediate reception from our dealers and contractors has been great. CAD and Astatic's long tradition of innovative products, both on the commercial and pro AV side, makes this relationship a really solid match for Ludwig Marketing and our dealers."

"We are very pleased about the addition of Ludwig Marketing to our U.S. sales force," said Jeff Beck, director of sales for CAD Audio. "Don is a longtime industry professional, and we feel he and his staff add a new caliber of representation to our sales force; not only in the MI market, but with integrators and consultants as well." **{cadaudio.com}**

Ludwig's Don Ludwig

APPOINTMENTS

FENDER HIRES FIRST-EVER CMO

Evan Jones

Fender has added Evan Jones as its first Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) to lead the company's global marketing strategies and initiatives. Jones has been tasked with building deeper consumer connections with Fender and its portfolio of brands.

"Hiring our first CMO is another milestone in our long-term plan to continue to engage consumers in unique ways with the Fender brand," said Scott Gilbertson, who joined Fender as interim CEO in spring 2014 after private equity firm TPG Growth invested in the company in 2012. "We are incredibly excited to have Evan's multi-brand experience, leadership and passion for Fender leading our strategic marketing efforts."

Jones brings more than 18 years of experience leading omni-channel marketing efforts for global companies in the sports, gaming and lifestyle sectors. He most recently served as CMO of New Era Cap Co., and prior to that held marketing roles with Nike, DC Shoes and Activision. Now Jones will bring his passion for music and Fender together with his years of experience marketing other iconic brands.

"I'm thrilled to be joining the Fender family to further build and lead our marketing and consumer engagement capabilities," Jones said. "I have a deep appreciation for the authenticity and evolution of Fender, and it's an honor to join the team." **{fender.com}**

Yamaha Corporation of America has announced three promotions in its management team. Tracy Bargielski has been promoted to vice president/general manager, human resources division. Garth Gilman was promoted to vice president/general manager, band & orchestral division, and Midori Overzyl has been named vice president/general manager, finance division.

John Anning has joined the Casio's electronic musical instruments (EMI) division. Anning has been hired in a dual role as piano business development and sales manager where he will cover the Northwest territory in his sales manager role, while also formulating development and growth plans for piano dealers across the United States.

Joyful Noise Drum Company has appointed Todd Trent as its chief operating officer. Trent brings more than three decades of percussion industry experience to Joyful Noise with experience in music retail, artist relations with Ludwig Drums, wholesale/OEM sales and marketing with Taye Drums, as well as pro touring management.

Breedlove

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Accomplished musicians will attest, consistent performances start with a reliable, great sounding guitar. The Premier Series offers the serious artist the renowned Breedlove distinctively crafted sound - the time-tested balance, clarity, and sustain – with the same attention to detail as a custom instrument. We invite you to learn about the Breedlove difference at www.breedlovesound.com.

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MP7 • Powerful Stage Piano and MIDI Controller.

VPC1 • The Finest Virtual Piano Controller

ES100 • Portable Digital Piano with Exceptional Tone and Touch

ES7 • The Ultimate Portable Digital Piano

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IDEAS

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LESSONS LEARNED | BY GERSON ROSENBLOOM

THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

They say that boxers need to excel in their footwork and that the best of them win in the ring based on that skill — much more so than brute strength. I believe that business people need to be equally quick on their feet to win in the sparring matches of everyday business life. Your interactions with customers do not come with a script. Every time you open your mouth without thinking first, you run the risk of saying something that could jeopardize your relationship with your customer. And yet, being too deliberate in your thought process makes you appear stiff and possibly calculating. It's a delicate balance.

You may have lots of preplanned verbiage that becomes part of your presentations, but it's the unscripted portion of your conversations that can either endear you to your customer, or forever blow up the relationship.

OPEN MOUTH, INSERT FOOT

In the early days of our business, our inventories were so lean that we would visit a local distributor several times per week to restock small goods and accessories. With so many visits, we developed a personal relationship with their staff. One day, our buyer walked in to see the sales associate talking to a woman at the counter. She turned to leave, walking past my buyer, who then approached the counter. With all the style of "Mad Men's" Don Draper, my buyer commented about how gorgeous the woman was until she turned around, and then how painful her face was. It turns out, the woman was the sales associate's wife! I don't know that our relationship ever really recovered from that lapse of judgment.

Unscripted portions of your conversations can either endear you to your customer or forever tarnish the relationship

Another time, a customer came in inquiring about repairs on a violin. Our associate, preparing to tell her about all the work that would be necessary, queried, "Where did you buy this piece of junk?" It turned out that she bought it from him a few years prior. Oops!

I had one associate who addressed young guys as "fella." So one day he asked, "What can I do for you, fella?" It turned out that the customer was a teenage girl.

And lest it sound like I never had any miscues, there was the time I was on the road selling guitars and had a dealer that bought my line early in the year. He quickly sold all that he had purchased, but then had a series of excuses through the course of the year why he couldn't restock. Finally in November, with the holiday season looming, when I asked for an order, he advised that he takes inventory on December 31, so he wanted to wait until January or February to buy. Out of sheer frustration, I shot back, "I can understand that you'd prefer to wait for the February rush." Would I have ever gotten anywhere with this dealer? I'll never know, because I let my words assure that he was alienated.

The thing about words is that you can't take them back. Fortunately for me and my staff, we were normally a lot better than these instances would make it appear. But on the occasional lapse, there is really only one solution. Once you realize that you have said something that you wish you hadn't, it's best to offer a sincere and unqualified apology. Any excuses you offer will weaken the impact of your apology and make it seem disingenuous.

Ideally, you'll hone your skills so that you can be proud of everything you say. Choose your words wisely, and you may just score the perfect takedown punch! **MI**

Gerson Rosenbloom is the vice president of strategic management at Sweetwater Sound, the former president of Medley Music, and a past NAMM chairman. Email him at: gersonmusicinc@gmail.com.

THE CUSTOMER WHISPERER | BY GREG BILLINGS

Five Sales Floor Blunders

A few weeks ago my wife Sara and I went to our favorite waterside restaraunt for a romantic Friday night date. Afterward, we walked over to another spot where our old friend and industry veteran, Rob Meads, plays piano. On the way there Sara popped into a little tourist shop called Horse of a Different Color. We were the only customers. Someone was stocking in the back.

As she scrutinized a decorative basket she said, "Horse of a different color, from the Wizard of Oz, when they were in the Emerald City, getting spruced up to see the wizard."

"No!" the owner interupted. "It was in Munchkinland."

"I'm pretty sure it was in the Emerald City," Sara said.

"No, it was definitely Munchkinland," replied the owner, firmly. After a few minutes we left — without the basket.

And there you have the first most common mistake made on the sales floor: arguing with the customer. Who cares what scene the horse was in? The customer had engaged and commented on the name of the business. Why not use the opportunity to make a friend instead of starting an argument?

'There are a few common mistakes we unknowingly make during our daily routine.'

WHAT TO AVOID ON THE SALES FLOOR

That shop owner probably didn't expect to start an argument and send a customer away when he got up that morning. But he probably has that same argument every day. With the same result. There are a few other common mistakes we unknowingly make during our daily routine.

Showing a customer a product before they have been qualified or greeted is another common error. Prescription without diagnosis is malpractice. And it's not just about finding out what they need. Greeting and qualification give us a chance to let our new best friends know that we care about them and their needs, and we want to save them time by taking them directly to the right items. It only takes a few minutes, but it starts the relationship on the right foot.

The third biggest mistake we make also concerns product. We give too much product information too quickly. Customers have short attention spans and a limited capacity to absorb information. They have probably already researched your products online and may know the specs better than your sales team. Our time is better spent focusing on features and their benefits than on specs and propaganda. What our customers really want are their needs fulfilled. Showing how a particular feature will do that is time better spent.

Taking the bait is the fourth faux pas that kills sales opportunities. If your client has just come from your competitor and seen another brand, a comment from you is not required unless they have asked for a specific comparison. Stop and think about it for a moment. They were in your competitor's store or on their website. They left without making a purchase and are here in your store now. They saw a competing product. They didn't buy it. There is no one here to defend it. Now it is your turn. Why would we want to spend anytime at all talking about the other guys?

Even worse: Our salespeople are often the ones who bring up the competition. We do it all the time. Why?

Finally, the biggest blunder of all is not asking for the sale. Don't believe them when they say they are coming back. They are not coming back! They are just saying that to be nice. There are a thousand things that can happen after they leave your store, and none of them are good things. Last September we had a customer die of a heart attack when he went home to get his checkbook. Customers don't buy where they get the best price, the best value or the color they want. They buy at the last place they shop — every time.

Study after study confirms that most customers leave retail stores without ever being asked to make a purchase. Ask for the order. It is just that simple. Ask them to buy. It might be just the little nudge they need to cross the line. "Do you feel as though this is the one you would like to have? Would you like me to show you some payment options, or are you just going to use a credit card?" The worst that can happen is they say "no," in which case we ask why and move on to more appropriate products.

This is not rocket science. Most our your clients no longer go from store to store before making a purchase. They go to the Web and look at items and vendors before they get off the couch. They probably came to your store with the intention of making a purchase. They have a credit card in their pocket. The sale is yours to lose. And making any of these five mistakes will do the trick. But staying focused, thinking smart and not making any stupid mistakes will send your customers home happy. **MI**

Greg Billings is the former owner of the Steinway Piano Gallery in Naples, Florida. He welcomes questions and comments at gregpianos@gmail.com. **He will be speaking on these five mistakes at Summer NAMM's NAMM U on July 9 at 4 p.m.**

FIVE BIGGEST SALES FLOOR BLUNDERS:

1.) Arguing with a customer
2.) Showing a customer a product before they've been qualified or greeted
3.) Giving too much information, too fast
4.) Bring up/putting down the competition
5.) Not asking for the sale

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THE LESSON ROOM | BY PETE GAMBER

The Lesson Snatchers

What would you say if I told you that over the next 10 years your retail store will lose its music lesson market share? So dramatically, in fact, that you'll no longer view music lessons as that untouchable source of income that keeps your store safe from economic variations. Just as music dealers have lost retail sales to the Internet and non-MI retailers over the last decade, there is a new threat to your music lesson program — the invasion of the music lesson snatchers a.k.a. non-retailer lessson studios.

These studios are popping up all over the country and are becoming "the place" to take lessons. They will be successful because they focus solely on teaching music lessons and offer creative programs that appeal to the "new music lesson needs."

These snatchers, which feature business models similar to franchise educational tutoring centers like Sylvan and Kumon, market a new contemporary approach to music lessons and often cover traditional types, such as rock lessons and technology lessons, while offering non-stop performance opportunities.

Don't wait for the invasion. Refresh your lesson program now. Here's what you can do:

Non-MI retail lesson studios have popped up all over the country. Make sure your program is ready

1. REDESIGN YOUR TEACHING METHODS TO INCREASE RETENTION.

Retention is the biggest challenge to your music lesson program. Convert what you are doing into shorter term goals rather than long term ones. Pretend that every student that starts only has a 90-day life in your lesson program. How would you reformat what you do? Remember you are teaching students that are used to "instant everything," so you need to get them musically up and running ASAP.

2. OFFER NEW CLASSES TO YOUR MUSIC LESSON PROGRAM.

Add new classes to the mix, such as a recording class, songwriting class or music software class. These are great additions to your mix of traditional lessons. Add Stomp-style percussion classes or vocal Glee-style classes. What about a one-month special appeal class like blues guitar?

3. MORE PERFORMANCES!

One student recital a year doesn't cut it. Neither does a one week summer rock band class. Student's are taking music lessons to learn to play. Your student recitals need to be every other month. Kids playing soccer don't play one game a year, so why do we only have one or two recitals a year?

4. IMPROVE YOUR FACILITY.

Is it time for some new paint or carpet? Windows on the lesson room doors? Flat screens playing video clips of your teachers, student recitals or rock camps? Add some cool gear to the lesson rooms. It's all about your vibe.

5. DON'T KEEP WHAT YOU DO YOUR BEST KEPT SECRET.

You need to let everyone in your market know you're the place to take music lessons. Don't be all hype. Make it happen in public. Hold performance activities at a park or shopping center. Seeing is believing, and the more your community sees your students perform, the more students you'll have. **MI**

Pete Gamber is a 35-year veteran of music retailing and music lessons. He specializes in music lesson programs and music retail consulting. He can be reached at: petegambermusic@gmail.com. **He will be speaking on lesson snatchers at Summer NAMM's NAMM U on July 10 at 1 p.m.**

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Get to know the new SLG here:
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THE TECH BEAT | BY JAMES HARDING

Small Business Fun

With the speed and ease of shopping online these days, there's no question that we all have to be engaged in some form of e-commerce. But, that doesn't mean we should abandon our brick-and-mortar stores. In fact, with the right mix of Internet savvy and in-store fun, small, local businesses can run circles around our larger competitors.

Before you read any further, take a second to write down your top five favorite places to shop. You might mention a local electronics store, a clothing outlet — or even The NAMM Show. But, take a minute to ask yourself, "What about these places attracts me?"

If you're like me, you probably wrote down a number of standard answers like "great selection," "good service," and "convenient location." But is that really all there is to it?

I recently hired a trio of interns to work with me in my Louisville, Kentucky, store. My hope was to get a sense of what kinds of things their generation looks for in a brick-and-mortar retail experience. After discussing their favorite places to shop, we took a "customer's tour" through our store — looking at everything as if we'd never seen it before. We even took photographs so we could evaluate our progress more objectively. We recorded every observation — from spiderwebs and power cords to color schemes and product locations. It was a very eye-opening experience.

Don't underestimate the importance of 'fun' in a showroom

When the internship ended, I found myself walking around a local mall thinking about what I'd learned and what kinds of things compel me to leave my couch and shop in a physical store. I found myself standing in front of a specialty electronics store when the answer finally hit me. I go where the fun is.

My favorite places to shop have all the basics. They are clean, offer great service and good prices. But the one unifying thing that sets these businesses apart from all the others is that they encourage me to play in ways I can't online. They offer me complete solutions — built from the kinds of things I might actually want to do in my home. They don't just line up a ton of products and wait for me to pick one. They show me what products and accessories I need and then show me how much fun having these items can be. Most importantly, they change their feature displays often, highlighting new products in creative ways and tying everything into the fundamental question customers always ask themselves: "Why do I need this?"

Since my interns' visit, I've set up a karaoke station with one of my high-end digital pianos, a good vocal mic, a mic stand and a flat-screen TV to show the lyrics. I've also set up a "teach yourself a song" station with a Disklavier silent player piano, a "Follow the Lights" station with the music from *Frozen* and video game demo featuring one of my interactive digital pianos.

Why not bring an Xbox into your store and host Guitar Hero or Rock Band parties? Or, try a "play along with the band" demo so your clients experience how fun it is to play their instrument in an ensemble environment?

"Big box" retailers and e-commerce portals can't compete with a little, home-grown creativity. Bring "fun" into your store and you will attract the kind of loyal customers that help small businesses thrive despite what the Internet is doing. **MI**

James Harding is the president of Gist Piano Center, a freelance Web designer, pianist and avid blogger. Email him at jharding@gistpianocenter.com.

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MY TURN | BY CAROLYN GRANT

Share Your History

The NAMM Museum of Making Music is dedicated to interpreting and sharing the unique accomplishments and lasting impact of the music products industry through a range of exhibitions, concerts and educational outreach programs. It opened to the industry in 1998, the public in 2000 and is located on the first floor of NAMM's international headquarters in Carlsbad, California. The museum is more than our industry's time capsule. It's a vibrant, cultural destination providing exhibitions and hands-on programming to more than 35,000 people annually, off-site musical training to 800 children, and weekly band and orchestra programs for 150 adults. As the person in charge of leading the preservation and sharing of the industry's history, the NAMM Museum of Making Music Executive Director Carolyn Grant offers perspectives about the importance and role of history and provides ideas to guide retailers and manufacturers in sharing their own stories.

Preserving and sharing your company's history matters

It has been said that history never looks like history when you are living through it. I love that statement, and before I worked in a museum I would probably have agreed with it. But now, in my role as executive director at the NAMM Museum of Making Music, not only am I aware of history in the making, I live its importance and witness its effect every day.

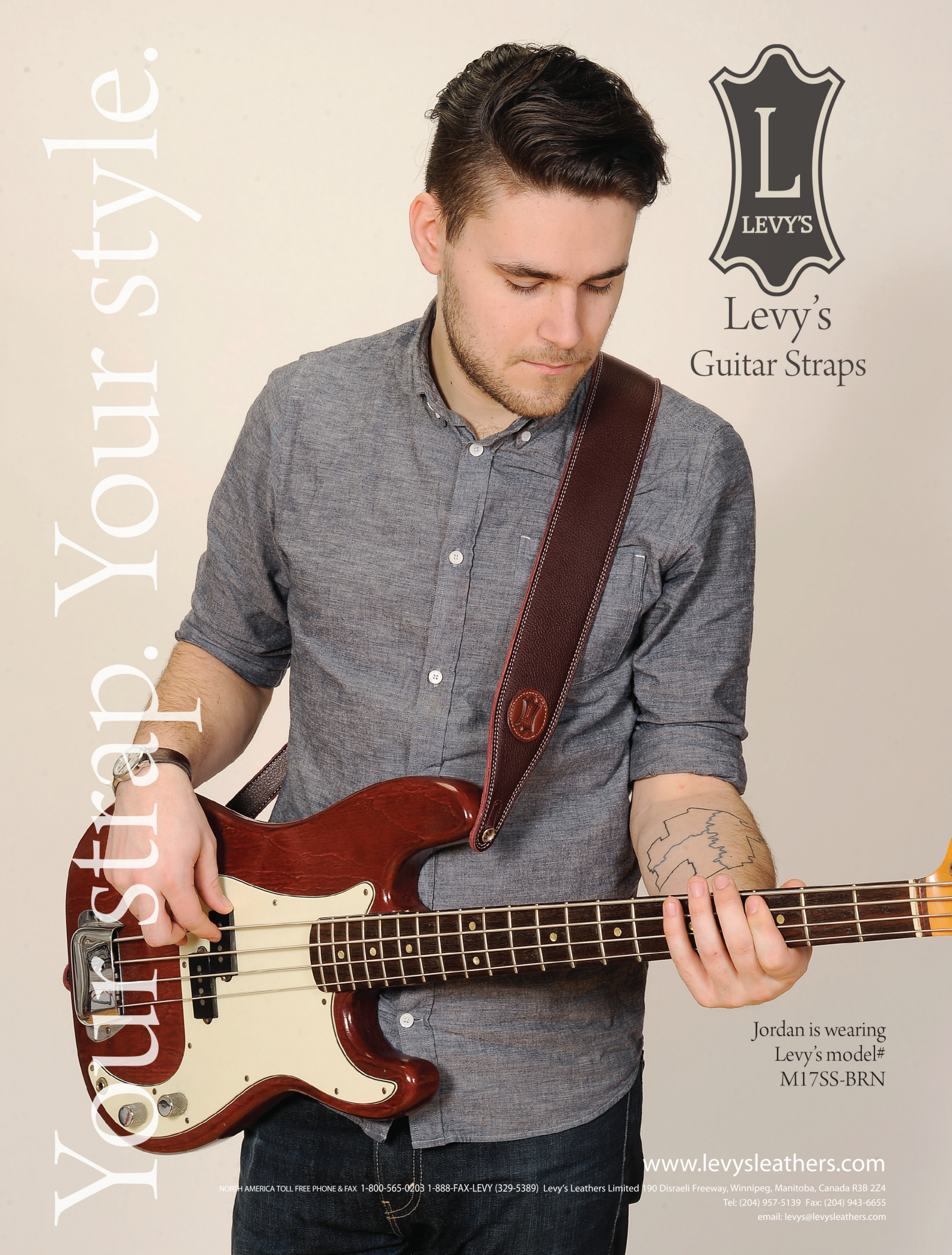
When we look back in time at milestone events, key players or game changing products, we discover an industry that has been unrelenting — for centuries — in providing the tools we need to express our experiences through sound and music. We also see an industry that is a vivid reflection of the world around it. A tangible history of the technology, for example, can be told through musical product development. Social movements and cultural shifts are reflected in sales history. Musical styles defined by specific product sounds have influenced entire generations. These insights can not only help but instill a sense of pride in us all.

History creates our industry's identity, and the museum's role is to celebrate this identity through unique, self-curated exhibitions and programs. As members of this industry, you participate in shaping this history by capturing and telling your own stories. Product and photographic displays in corporate headquarters are treasure troves, and websites with robust "about us" sections provide indispensable sources of knowledge and understanding. Companies, such as Amro Music, Sam Ash, C.F. Martin & Co. and Rickenbacker International Corporation are just a few of the many MI businesses doing a great job of preserving and sharing their story today.

Our goal as a museum is to evoke a change in every visitor that comes through our doors, whether it's acquiring new knowledge, developing a deeper understanding of the world through musical products or establishing a deeper connection with our industry. Every company — whether 300 or three years old — has a story to tell, a story that not only builds your brand but adds to the wealth of the industry as a whole.

Using examples from both the museum and NAMM members, next month, I'll share clear steps to telling your company's story through its history. In the final installment, I'll outline practical ideas for creating events and programs to evolve your business into a community hub for music making. **MI**

Carolyn Grant is the executive director of the NAMM Museum of Making Music in Carlsbad, California. This is her first in a series of three installments on the importance of documenting your company's history and creating programs for customers based on that history.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From left: Brian Douglas, Ben Derickson and John Majdalani.

REVAMPED GROWTH

By Ed Enright, Photos by Žaneta Čuntová

Upgraded systems and a refreshed vision have led to explosive growth at Cream City Music

In May of 2013, Brian Douglas and his two partners found themselves in a most unfamiliar position. They had just purchased the store where they worked — Cream City Music in suburban Milwaukee — after it became available to them on relatively short notice.

The new owners had some MI retail experience, but none of them had ever been the proprietor of a music store. And they knew that if they were going to survive the transition and keep the reputable Cream City Music brand alive, they would need to formulate a plan and envision some realistic goals — fast.

So Douglas, along with co-owners John Majdalani and Ben Derickson, did just that. Following a careful course of action, which Douglas describes as "crawl, walk, run," they have managed to surpass all expectations by a long shot. Indeed, in the two years since this ambitious trio took over, Cream City Music has experienced explosive growth while dedicating itself to customer service and building a reputation as a guitar player's paradise.

Cream City Music consists of a retail location and website dealing in new and used guitars, basses, amps, effects and accessories. The company also does business through online entities, such as Amazon, Reverb and eBay, and is known internationally as a top purveyor of vintage pieces. Guitarists and bassists have come to love the store for its service, its casual vibe and the expertise of its on-staff specialists.

FROM EMPLOYEES TO OWNERS

Cream City Music's founder, Joe Gallenberger, started the business out of his home in 1999 and later incorporated as Warpdrive Music, opening a retail location in 2001 in Milwaukee's Bayview neighborhood. In 2006, Gallenberger moved the store into its current location in Brookfield, Wisconsin. The name change came in 2003 when Gallengberger switched it to Cream City Music — a moniker for Milwaukee that dates back to the 19th century, when many buildings in the area were erected using a distinctive type of cream-colored brick.

Gallenberger decided to sell Cream City Music in 2013 in order to follow other business pursuits. He found a buyer, but the deal fell through, and he quietly approached employees Douglas, Majdalani and Derickson about buying the business from him.

"I thought, there's no way we're going to be able to raise this money and put this thing together," Douglas said. "We're just some guys working in a guitar shop. It sure sounds like a great idea, but none of us has any money. So, thanks, but there's not much we can do."

Never one to shy away from a challenge, though, he mulled over the idea for a few weeks before deciding to make a go of it.

"The first obstacle was how to come up with the money," said Douglas, a loyal staffer at Cream City Music since 2004, when a position was created for him by Gallenberger, who liked his way with customers. "So, I birthed the idea that I would approach a group of my best customers that I had long-term relationships with here at the store, and asked them to lend me money to come up with the down payment. Within a week I had raised it. It was simple: Lend me money for a year, and I'll give you a percentage return on it. That was negotiated among each individual. John put together all of his savings, and Ben had one good customer he was able to raise some from, so they kicked in a little bit, too."

Once the deal was closed, Douglas and his partners began taking the steps needed to gain control of the business and ensure its future health.

"One of the very first things was getting a really rock-solid foundation in place for managing the day-to-day cash of the business," Douglas said. "That involved hiring a guy who's a controller, who's an absolute pro, forensic-quality controller to help us understand the daily goings-on of how money was being used within the business: tracking the expenses, handling payables, projecting out what our needs were going to be. I certainly know how to sell guitars, but I was not the guy to be sitting there cutting checks to vendors. I knew that it was much smarter for us to invest in somebody who is a true expert at that."

Majdalani, who also started at Cream City Music in 2004, continued to run the store's sizable vintage department. His expertise helped put the company on the map under its previous ownership.

"I have always been the used and vintage specialist," he said, noting that he has been a buyer and seller of used gear since his teenage years. "I've followed the market and been part of the market. I've seen the trends change, and I've also set some of those trends, too. I didn't want to leave the trenches — that's where my passion lies."

Derickson remained in charge of many of the brands he had been developing, including Gretsch, which occupies an entire room — the coolest space in the store, no doubt — just off the main show floor. As an owner, he now contributes ideas on how to improve Cream City Music's infrastructure and systems. He helps solve problems.

"We don't just pull guitars off shelves," he said. "Even if it's a low-end guitar, it's unboxed and completely inspected. Every single stringed instrument gets a setup, and we make sure that they're good to go and that the necks are straight, everything. For a medium-sized shop that ships a lot of guitars, that became a challenge. Making sure that there was a solid system in place to get that task done efficiently was kind of an undertaking, but we've been able to really crack that nut and make it happen."

Douglas assumed the role of general manager.

"I was the guy who had to completely change everything," he said. "I had been the retail showroom manager, so now I suddenly had to learn how to be the GM of a business of this size, just by sheer force of will and day-to-day grinding it out, learning by doing. I'm a guy who learns by doing things. So I really had to deal with it all. I had to understand how our inventory was shaped. I had to understand what we needed based upon where we were succeeding and where we were failing under prior ownership. Immediately we made the decision to reinvest in the showroom.

"I'm a showroom guy," continued Douglas, a gregarious individual who grew up in Chicago and got his first MI retail gig in 1996 at Music Center in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Top left: The three partners in the main showroom.
Right: Cream City's store front features a large guitar, drawing the eye of passing traffic.
Opposite page left: Custom in-store signage with tasteful artwork sends the message Cream City wants to relate without being overly commercial.
Opposite page right: The store's pedal display.

"When people walk in the front door, that's what makes the day for me. I wanted to improve the merchandising of the shop. That involved creating our own custom in-store signage with tasteful artwork that sends the messages that we wanted to send without being overly commercial about it: We buy guitars, we love trade-ins, we have a world-class repair department for fretted instruments, we offer layaways, we offer financing. The graphics on the signs reflect the same image and artwork that are on our website and in our print ads, so there's a cohesive brand identity."

GETTING UP & RUNNING

The second step was to hire someone to replace Douglas as the showroom manager.

"We found a guy who understood the Cream City Music ethic and embodies the spirit of warmth and friendliness that we wanted to see in somebody being the face of the showroom," Douglas said. "We're on a non-commission-based system. We're here to help customers find the gear that they need in order to unlock that creative potential that they're seeking, and I think that makes us different than commission-based shops on a lot of levels."

With new roles defined and the proper staff in place, the next goal was to update Cream City Music's product mix.

"We had to find out what was working, what wasn't, get rid of what wasn't, expand upon what was working and explore new territories," Douglas said. "That meant adding new brands, going deeper on SKUs — not necessarily in terms of the depth of SKUs, or quantities, but rather a broad net thing where we've got a little of a lot as opposed to a lot of a little type of thing. That way, when people come in there's so much variety for them to choose from, it keeps it interesting.

"We changed the way that we organize all the products in the shop. The organization of the guitars — everything was put together in a way that was very logical. Then we brought a

lot of pedals in. We wanted to have the pedals that would bring folks in, to come in and engage and be more socially active in the showroom, because we're about building a community of players. I wanted to create a great place that people want to be part of and come to visit and buy from. I didn't want the shop to be so dependent on online sales because down the road we'll probably see something like an Internet sales tax, and you never know how eBay's fortunes are going to change, or fees are going to be going up on the other various platforms. By investing in the showroom, I knew we were hedging our bet against any changes in that global marketplace."

Next on the to-do list was getting a firmer grasp on inventory control. With no formalized purchase order system in place during the prior ownership, Douglas said they'd frequently run out of product and, not knowing it was gone, missed turns.

"I took a close look at how I was going to manage the inventory, and that was one of the biggest educations: How do you take an inventory this massive and learn what to do in order to manage it? I spent a lot of time researching online, diving into books, but then also taking a look at our own point-of-sale system and understanding the relationships between the numbers. That way we could spot trends, we could spot areas of opportunity, we could spot deficiencies, we could work proactively to maintain the health of the various brands we carry. That's something I do here religiously: I'm going through the health of every new product brand, measuring the GMROI [gross margin return on investment] and the turns on a macro and a micro level so that I can spot trends and make sure that I'm ordering appropriately and keeping that product turning."

Douglas and his team began to notice almost immediately that their efforts were paying off. People were in the shop more, customers were buying more, and top-line and bottom-line increases continued month after month. Cream City Music had begun to progress through the "crawl," "walk" and "run" phases of business growth, and the brand was gradually starting to shape up as planned — and then some.

"When we took over in May of 2013 we were 'crawling,'" Douglas said. "We didn't have any targets or a real specific sense of what the numbers were going to bear out beyond what the prior administration had been. But we were able to end that first eight-month window profitably, and we walked out of 2013 going, 'Wow, we made it.'

"Then we entered the 'walking' phase: Let's set a steady pace, let's aim for a percentage of total growth that we think we can achieve. And we were able to exceed that beyond what we had anticipated, and that was predicated upon setting various goals, from completely revamping our shipping apparatus, to completely revamping the way that product is received into our inventory and propagated throughout the entire business — the showroom, the website, Reverb, eBay and Amazon. We were able to triple the amount of product we could put out there at any given time."

Cream City Music is currently in the "run" phase, according to Douglas.

"Now we see what we're capable of doing, so let's set a more aggressive but still realistic

goal. That's something that kind of caught us by surprise in 2015: We more than doubled what our target for growth was for the year. Obviously we have another half a year to go, but the reality is Q1 and through a good portion of Q2, we're at more than double what we had planned for targeted growth. And it's been a function of all the things that we've been doing to help propel us to some pretty crazy amount of expansion."

Leery of growing too quickly, Douglas has been careful not to expand beyond what he and his team can handle.

"I'm a huge believer in slow, organic growth," he said. "If you grow too fast, you can die. I saw how Cream City had gone through a period of growth just before the economic collapse of 2008, and that almost took the company out. But the prior owners were very shrewd about how to navigate that and got us through that tough period. From that, I learned that controlled, sustainable growth is one of the most important things. Now, it's certainly a blessing when you go well beyond what you anticipated for growth. But the reason that we've been able to do that is because the strength of the systems that we built and put in place allowed us to handle the increase in volume."

Going forward, Douglas wants to be certain that there is never a situation where Cream City Music grows so rapidly that the quality of service begins to suffer. "We don't do this for money," he stressed. "We do this because we're the stewards of the musical journey for every person who comes in contact with us. It's the ultimate reward." **MI**

WALK THROUGH

According to Cream City Music's Brian Douglas, the store was set up to have the maximum impact on the customer when they walk in, providing a sense of wonder — no matter if it's the customer's first time in the store or 100th. Here's Cream City Music at a glance.

GRETSCH ROOM ▶

"The Gretsch room is a very important part of the Cream City Music identity. Everybody's got an acoustic room, so rather than go in that direction, why not choose something that's truly iconic? And that was the Gretsch brand. Back in '06 when we opened in this location, we had been coming on strong with the brand. Gretsch was seeing a resurgence in popularity and the quality of the instruments, so the decision was made to commit an entire room to the Gretsch experience. That led us to going everything Gretsch: lots of Gretsch memorabilia all over the place, getting period-correct furniture from the heyday era of Gretsch, the late '50s and early '60s. All the furniture reflects that kind of mid-century vibe. The walls and ceiling are painted in the Gretsch anniversary two-tone green, with a dark green ceiling and light green walls. Fred Gretsch has called Cream City Music 'the capital of the Gretsch nation.' We are one of the largest Gretsch dealers and the only one with such a committed and dedicated all-Gretsch showroom. It makes it a destination for people."

ACCESSORIES SPOT ▲

"To the very left, we keep all of our accessories, so all the grab-and-go stuff is right there ready for you. When people just need to get in and get out, they can find what they need. It's not separated by a counter with a clerk that they have to interact with necessarily—they can just grab what they need and go. It's organized in a very intuitive fashion, so that all the small goods are categorized. Customers aren't searching around everywhere. Capos are with capos. Strings are with strings. Cables with cables."

"A lot of shops have the tendency to put their most expensive guitars on the highest hooks, limiting customer access because they only want the qualified buyer or to prevent theft. We prefer to keep these instruments in the middle area of the wall. We want people to have access to even the highest-end stuff."

▼ MAIN SHOWROOM

"The sweeping panorama is nothing but guitars, and you're captured by this blast of musical instruments. We have all the single-floor racks of acoustic guitars, in addition to the double racks of acoustic guitars with all our highest-end and best-looking acoustics along those top holding spaces. Just behind that we've got the wall of vintage guitars. That's where we keep all of our best and brightest vintage and used pieces."

GIBSON & FENDER WALL ►

"Gibson and Fender are across the entire main wall, because those are two of our key brands. On the third wall, you see the basses. We don't have hundreds of basses like we have hundreds of guitars, but we have a very eclectic selection. On the Gibson side, everything is organized from most expensive to least expensive going from right to left. And the way the hooks are oriented for the Fender wall, they go from left to right. It's all based upon the symmetry of the area and the orientation of the hooks. Everything is categorized from most expensive to least expensive, and keeping it within the framework of brand, model and price point. It takes the customer on a logical journey through what represents your top-end down to the entry level."

◄ THREE-SIDED COUNTER

"We have a three-sided counter in the center of the room. There's always something going on there. Ninety-five percent of our pedals are in the counter cases. We also keep our showroom tech out there. As part of Cream City's value proposition to the customer, we provide an on-the-spot custom setup to whatever their tastes are, including their brand of string and string gauge. That way, when they purchase an instrument from us, they can walk out of the shop with something that's absolutely stellar."

FROM THE TOP

INTERVIEWED BY MICHAEL GALLANT

BRIAN BALL | ERNIE BALL

HOW DO YOU START YOUR DAY?

I wake up around 6 or 6:30 a.m., have some coffee, and spend an hour with my two-year-old daughter before heading into the office. I usually arrive by 8 a.m. and catch up on emails from the morning and the night before. At the office, every day is a little different, but I'll generally meet with our engineers, marketing staff, and sales managers, to discuss the latest projects we have going on. I kind of thrive on chaos to a degree and don't really like a regimented schedule.

HOW SO?

I like being involved in many different aspects of the company — creative/marketing, product development, sales, accounting, and managing people is obviously a huge part of the job. Depending on the projects we have going on, whether it's a string, accessory, or instrument, I'll prioritize my involvement based on what's the most pressing time-wise and what will bring us the most revenue and excitement in the marketplace. The point is that I don't have a rigid schedule and that's by design. Having every day be a little bit different is what works best for me.

WHAT'S YOUR OWN MUSICAL BACKGROUND?

I didn't pick up the guitar until I was 19, which occasionally bums me out, because music was around me for my whole life. I played soccer, baseball, tennis, and other sports, and that took up a lot of my time growing up. I played tennis competitively in college, but once that was over, I went out on the Vans Warped Tour one summer, picked up a guitar, and fell in love with it. Fifteen years into playing, I'm finally in a band and have some exciting gigs coming up. It's an incredible outlet, and I love it. It's like exercising — if I don't pick up my guitar for 10-20 minutes a day, I don't feel right.

STAYING ACTIVE IS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Exercise is huge. It gives me energy and puts me in a great state of mind at the office. A couple days a week, I eat a quick lunch and hit some tennis balls to get exercise in before returning in the afternoon. Doing things like that to stay active puts me in the best position to be a good husband, father, and president at the company. Health and wellness is a huge priority for us from a management standpoint. My dad, Sterling, started a program a few years ago that's been really popular in that we provide a free gym membership for employees here in San Luis Obispo and Coachella.

IS THAT A PERK OF EMPLOYMENT, OR PART OF A LARGER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY?

It's definitely part of a larger management strategy. We believe that there's a direct benefit for the company if you have employees who are healthy and prioritize wellness. It eliminates the potential of having lots of flus and colds in the office and we find that the overall workplace is more productive when people are active — so it was definitely a conscious management decision.

WHAT'S YOUR FATHER'S INVOLVEMENT WITH ERNIE BALL?

He's the CEO and is still very active with the company. I've been very fortunate to not just be mentored by him, but I also get to work together on a ton of products and projects here. My grandpa passed away in 2004, and we try to preserve his legacy on a daily basis. Every day, I walk in to the office, go up the stairs, and see the big Ernie Ball eagle mural on the wall. It gives me a sense of both pride and responsibility. I definitely want to preserve my grandpa's legacy and meanwhile try to create my own footprint that he and my dad would be proud of. This has always been my dream job and continues to be to this day.

ERNIE BALL HAS SOME AMAZING ARTISTS ON ITS ROSTER. HOW INVOLVED ARE YOU?

I did a variety of jobs here after high school, but my first real start with the company after junior college was artist relations. I've been fortunate to work with great artists, such as Slash, John Mayer and Maroon 5, and I definitely think we are fortunate that our products were born out of rock 'n' roll. Having guys like Paul McCartney, Angus Young, Keith Richards and Jeff Beck not only play our products in the 1960s, but also to have them stand by them for more than half a century is something that we're very proud of. We look at every one of our artists as a member of the extended family. We work hard to be progressive with our artist relations program and believe that that is a competitive edge for us.

WHAT DOES PROGRESSIVE ARTIST RELATIONS MEAN TO YOU?

There are other string brands that do a great job, and

THE DETAILS

BRIAN BALL, PRESIDENT

HQ: San Luis Obispo, California
Founded: 1962
Employees: 450
Fun Fact: Ball is not only an enthusiastic guitarist, but also an avid athlete and sports fan who used to play competitive tennis in college.

any brand can provide free strings to artists. When I say that we're progressive, I mean that we try to set up as many programs as possible to help the artist. We're not sponsors. We're partners. We're there to provide products but also to help artists with their craft and to support them, especially at a time when radio is less of a presence and asset than it was. We'll use whatever different promotional vehicles we can to help — just sending out free strings to an artist when he or she calls, that's not artist relations to me.

CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE?

We've invested heavily in digital content out of our showroom in Los Angeles. When one of our endorsed artists has a new record coming out, they'll come into the showroom and we'll film them playing a stripped-down version of their song and invest a ton of digital dollars into spreading that content. We hope that it'll help them not only with that song, but with the whole record. It's about providing another antenna for artists to help promote their craft. Also, when an artist has a new record coming out, we'll sometimes try to create once-in-a-lifetime opportunities that involve customers, retailers, and artists all at once. In return for artists giving us that experience, we promote their albums inside packs of Ernie Ball strings. That's a lot of eyeballs from a targeted audience for the artist.

> 'I GET FRUSTRATED WITH THE NOTION THAT A GUITAR STRING IS JUST A GUITAR STRING. WE'RE DOING EVERYTHING WE CAN TO DEFY THAT ASSUMPTION.'

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN YOUR ROLE?

I became president at NAMM in January of this year, so it's a pretty recent promotion. Before that, I was vice president, and we didn't have a president, so it's a newly created position. I'm thrilled about it, and I'm excited about the process of continuing to build off our already strong team.

WHAT WAS THE TRANSITION LIKE?

It hasn't been very difficult, largely because we've hired incredibly talented people along the way. I was running Ernie Ball's creative and marketing work for a while, but now I'm transitioning out of that to focus more on other goals for the company. So, to a degree I've taken a back seat to all of the fun stuff, but I know we're in a much better place because of the transition, and I feel like I'm not spread too thin.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES AS PRESIDENT?

For me specifically, I think the hardest part of the job is also the most exciting part of the job. Trying to push the boundaries of what string technology looks like, what unique accessories can we develop, and how can we continue to differentiate ourselves 50-plus years after my grandpa created Slinkys. Secondary, is the responsibility of 450 families and managing any problems that arise either here at work, or at home. Lastly, would be managing the two different brands. They're similar, but they are pretty different in how we operate and brand Ernie Ball and Music Man.

HOW SO?

With Ernie Ball, we're making hundreds of thousands of strings every day. Then we have Music Man, where we're making 60 high-end instruments each day. The businesses and manufacturing processes are very different, and we want there to be a balance of both between synergy and separation with how we market the brands. And even though the processes are quite a bit different, we don't outsource anything for either of them. All products are made right here in California.

TO SOME CUSTOMERS, GUITAR STRINGS MIGHT ALL SEEM THE SAME. HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THAT?

Differentiating products has been a huge priority to me and the company over the last 10 years. I get frustrated with the notion that a guitar string is just a guitar string. We're doing everything we can to defy that assumption. If you look at the last five to eight years, we've been on a pretty incredible path of innovation. We have two patents with our cobalt strings, which attract the magnets in a guitar's pickups more than any alloy out there. We've got another patent on a new core wire technology, which is ultra-high strength maraging steel. Not only does it give the guitarist more low end, but it also improves tuning stability and fatigue strength. I think we're leading the way when it comes to giving guitarists as many unique tonal options as possible. We want something that will make a guitar player immediately recognize that they're dealing with something both unique and better.

IF NOT MUSIC, WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING?

Since sports is my second passion, I would probably be working with a professional sports franchise. General manager of a pro team would be another dream job of mine.

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-Ren Ferguson
VP of R&D and Manufacturing

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What Happened In Vegas

By David Ball

What happened at this year's RPMDA convention in Las Vegas surely won't stay there. Following last year's unanimous board decision to extend equal membership and voting rights to publishers (which had hitherto been available only to retailers), there was an air of goodwill and community amongst buyers and suppliers at this year's convention, allowing for both productive conversations and spirited debate.

"There are a lot of things to be excited about," said Carol Wilbur of Pender's Music, and former RPMDA president. "When the by-laws changed, that was a very, very important [event] because we needed to have everybody drawn together. At the same time, we were also able to reduce the size of the board. So, we're doing more work, but it's done a lot more efficiently and a lot more cost-effectively."

The intimate setting allowed retailers quality face-time not only with their suppliers, but with other buyers, as well, in a friendly, non-competitive setting. "The value for me was the networking and the one-on-one communication with other buyers," said Pam Aalbers, print music buyer for Ted Brown Music. "And getting ideas, especially during breakfast and lunch around the tables, where there was really honest communication and brainstorming."

The convention kicked off with a keynote address from Sunny Grosso, coaching and culture chief at Zappos, the online shoe store based in Las Vegas. (Some RPMDA members also toured the Zappos headquarters the day before the start of the convention.) Her speech, titled "Delivering Happiness," set the tone for the rest of the weekend, reminding dealers and publishers alike that a culture of happiness in the workplace contributes to productivity and a better quality of life for employees.

"It could be that we're at some kind of a tipping point with this idea of happiness at work and how we work," Grosso said. "The same things don't motivate people in the same ways anymore. So, it might be that we're at a point where the way that we think about happiness at work can change the experience of our lives, and it can change our experience of work."

The 2016 RPMDA convention will be in St. Louis, April 27-30. MI

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1. From left: NAMM's Eric Ebel and Marcia Neel, with Willis Music's Kevin Cranley and Alfred's Ron Manus, discuss the benefits of music education during the NAMM general session. **2.** From left: Metropolis Music Publishers' Pieter Nieva with United Music & Media Publishers' Bill Van Steenberg and Matt Johnston. **3.** Breitkopf & Härtel's Annekathrin Mascus. **4.** Kjos' Karl Kjos (left) and Jason Yamaoka (right). **5.** Sunny Grosso, coaching and culture chief at Zappos, gives the RPMDA's keynote address, "Delivering Happiness." **6.** Long & McQuade's Bob Kohl (left) with RPMDA President, Christie Smith, after Kohl received the President's Award. (He also received the Dorothy Award.) **7.** From left: Jill Jeffers of Jeffers Handbell Supply, Music Gifts' Robin Galison, Steve's Music's Norman Zimmerman and Music Gifts' Debbie Knight. **8.** Universal Edition's Florian Hrschka. **9.** From left: Alfred's Renee Cunning, Pam Hendricks, Antonio Ferranti, Krista Hart, Alex Ordoñez and Elisa Palladino. **10.** From left: Hal Leonard's Tim Cose, Chara Fedke, Bruce Bush, Maribeth Barrons, Chrissy Dzioba and David Jahnke. **11.** Barenreiter's Petra Woddfull-Harris. **12.** FJH Music Company's Kevin Hackinson. **13.** Randall Faber, author of *Faber Piano Adventures*, delivers the final day's breakfast session, "Nurturing Musical Minds, Hearts & Communities." **14.** Kendor's Mendy Varga. **15.** Music Play Along's Wilson Hsueh and Sydney Lin. **16.** Online Sheet Music's Christy Priest and Chaim Rubinov. **17.** Carl Fischer's Rachelle Gayer.

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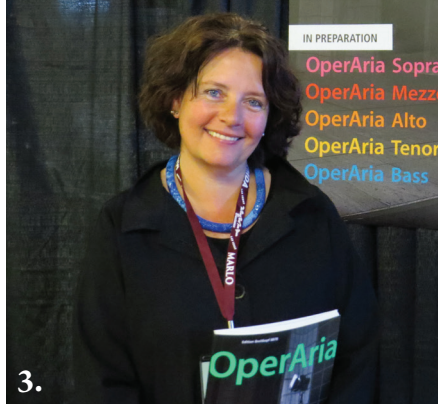

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Print - Still Your Best Bet

Industry leaders weigh in on print music vs. digital print-on-demand

Alan Friedman

FRIEDMAN'S FINAL WORDS

1. While many factors affect the sale of printed product, the consumer's desire for digital delivery has significantly impacted the sale of music CDs, printed books and print music.

2. Not all print music lends itself to be sold in digital form.

3. While everything is not available, hundreds of thousands of print music SKU's are already available in print-on-demand form.

4. The availability of print-on-demand enhances sales revenue for both publishers and retailers by reaching new customers and prevents out-of-stock loss of sales.

5. POD can create greater profits for publishers and retailers alike by eliminating inventory carrying costs.

6. Yes, there is a significant cost to most publishers to offer POD; but contrary to popular belief, the retailer can actually start selling POD with little or no upfront cost. A more robust functionality does require a greater investment.

7. POD provides significant ROI to both the publisher and retailer.

8. Customer desire for digital product is here to stay. Accordingly, retailers must constantly implement new time-saving technology in their stores.

CAN PRINT MUSIC IN THE FORM OF HARD-COPY FOLIOS STILL COMPETE IN A DIGITAL WORLD?

Four leaders in the print music world took on the subject during a spirited debate at RPMDA. CPA Alan Friedman, partner of Friedman, Kannenberg & Co. and *Music Inc.* columnist, led the discussion, which featured a panel, including Ron Manus, CEO of Alfred, Bob Kohl, print purchasing manager for Long & McQuade, and Joel Menchey, past RPMDA president and owner of Menchey Music. Here are some highlights.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH PRINT?

▶ After enumerating the benefits of keeping print music in the store, Friedman added this point, playing the devil's advocate. "It's easily duplicated by unscrupulous customers and often goes undetected and unpunished. It also generates a less-than-great gross profit margin once you take into account all of the product that you're stocking and selling at a discount or throwing away. It generally yields a low ROI. And many store print departments are lacking profitability."

WHAT IF WE DISTRIBUTE PRINT MUSIC DIGITALLY?

▶ "It's a simpler uniform presentation of product information," Friedman noted. "Both retailers and publishers don't have to touch it [since] it's downloaded directly to the customer. Both [retailers and publishers] could deliver product sooner, or even instantaneously. We both could become profitable, or more profitable. And this could all be accomplished by something called print-on-demand (POD)."

PRINT ON DEMAND POTENTIAL

▶ "What we're really talking about today is POD and how that can be delivered to your store," Manus said. "All of a sudden you have access to every book or every title that we have in digital. Then you're not out of stock on anything. A lot of these publishers have this available. But it's not being used as much as we [the panel members] think it should be."

CHANGE THE MIX

▶ "I truly believe that we need content to promote music making and music education; but the fiscal side of me has struggled because I can't rationalize spending money on a segment of our business that has continued to lose money," Menchey said.

To demonstrate his point, Menchey showed a balance sheet of his print music department. After payroll and overhead expenses, his net income showed a 10-percent loss.

He said the ideal situation would be one where 80-percent of print sales were converted to digital. Freight costs would decrease, obsolete inventory and fulfillment costs would go away, and rent and occupancy would drop significantly.

ESSENTIAL TO THE MUSIC STORE ECOSYSTEM

▶ "One of the things that print music is magical for is that it really is that product in the music products industry ecosystem that supports every other division," Kohl rebuttled. "It draws a customer back across your threshold again and again for more repertoire and more interesting styles to learn, and it's a constant consumable. The other thing too is that it probably is the best retention tool that you have for rentals and for lessons."

PUSHING DIGITAL

▶ "Rather than wait for them to decide, we — as an industry — need to figure out how to somehow move across the spectrum to get more of our print distributed digitally," Menchey said. "Because I don't think the customers are going to tell us when they're ready." MI

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Turn, Turn, Turn

A rundown on inventory management and finding the right balance between efficiency and effectiveness

IF YOU THINK OF A RETAIL BUSINESS AS A CASH PUMP, BUYING INVENTORY AND TURNING IT OVER IS WHAT KEEPS THAT PUMP MOVING. KNOWING WHAT KIND OF INVENTORY TO BUY FROM YOUR SUPPLIER CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE AS TO HOW MUCH CASH YOUR BUSINESS PUMPS OUT – AND HOW OFTEN.

Lori Supinie

TURNING INVENTORY

"When I look at the inventory in the store, I see trapped cash," said Lori Supinie of Senseney Music. "That's is what we're in this to do, but we have to look at it as a tool to create cash.

"When we talk about turning, we're talking about efficiency. Turnover is a measure of how quickly the [inventory] we buy is going out the door, and we want to maximize that turnover rate." To find the rate of inventory turnover, divide the cost of goods sold (COGS) by average inventory (in dollars).

FACTORS AFFECTING EFFICIENCY

Some factors that can affect turnover efficiency are just realities of the music products business.

"We do stock orders two times per year. By definition, we're going to get six months inventory, in general, of the things that we want to stock. So, that's going to make it tough to get much higher than a turnover rate of two times per year.

"Stocking plans can negatively affect turnover. You're getting more stock in. If it's a rack program, that can be a positive thing, because if it's not turning, you can return it and try something else. So, rack programs can positively affect inventory.

Obsolescence also negatively affects efficiency. "If you've got birthday items on the shelf, those are increasing the denominator of that equation."

Timely returns, on the other hand, can make for more efficient inventory management. "Theres a lot of times – whether its a rack program, or promotional material where you partner with your vendor and they will send stuff either on consignment, or they will say 50 percent of it is returnable — doing those timely returns is important, and not waiting until the very last minute."

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

"Inventory is an asset that we're investing in, and we need to make sure that we have a return on that investment. So, this where the effectiveness comes in. This is where we look at that gross margin and see how many dollars are we actually getting on that sale.

"This is where we're looking at those gross margin dollars, and we divide that by our average inventory to get gross margin return on investment (GMROI)."

FACTORS AFFECTING ROI

"New issues can positively affect ROI because you get a better discount [from the publisher], and sometimes taking new issues from publishers means that we get better discounts on everything.

"Stock orders can possibly affect overall effectiveness, because we generally get great terms, but it could be a negative on the efficiency side.

"Promotional opportunities can be great opportunities to partner with your vendors, to pull inventory in for a short period of time, sometimes on consignment, with opportunities to get follow-up orders. This can be good, as long as we're vigilant about it.

"Discounting to customers, on the other hand, can negatively affect our ROI, the more we're giving away dollars."

EVALUATE/RE-EVALUATE

Supinie recommends using software tools like a Min/Max system in order to keep an eye on inventory to see what's working and what's not.

"It's never done, never finished, and you have to constantly go back and look at something else. You want to evaluate and re-evaluate new issues and stock order plans. It's all about balance. You have to recognize there are trade-offs. You have to pick your battles. There is no magic right answer." MI

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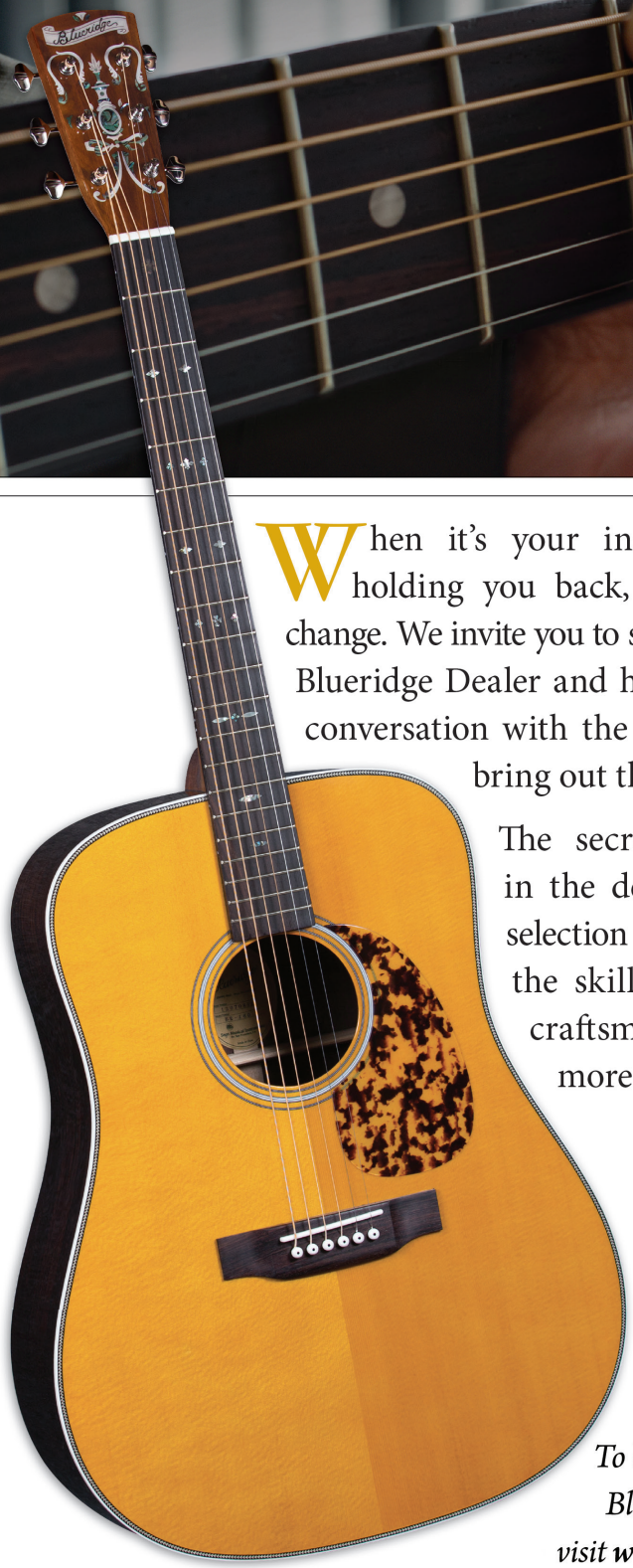

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Best Ideas

From welcome kits to lifeboats, RPMDA attendees share their best ideas

Host of the "Best Ideas" session, Willis Music's President, Kevin Cranley; contest winner, United Music and Media Publishers' Matt Johnston; and Christie Smith, RPMDA president.

RPMDA'S "BEST IDEAS" SESSION HAS BECOME OF A STAPLE OF THE CONVENTION, WHERE ATTENDEES PAY $10 TO GIVE A TWO MINUTE SPIEL. HALF OF THE DONATIONS GO TO THE ED ADAMS SCHOLARSHIP FUND, AND THE WINNER TAKES THE OTHER HALF. HERE ARE SOME OF THIS YEAR'S BEST IDEAS.

HOST PRINT MUSIC DAY

▶"Let's pick a day in the United States and Canada for Sheet Music Day. There'll be giveaways, prizes, celebrity appearances. We could promote digital product this way, right? Come in and get a free on-demand copy of whatever song you want.

"This would be so easy for us to do. It would build national awareness, it would be fun for our customers. We could probably get some new customers."

—Elliot Wessel, Music & Arts Center

NEW TEACHER WELCOME KITS

▶"We created New Teacher Welcome Kits from Senseney Music. We got free samples from publishers. Manufacturers have little tip books, and we got some of those. NAMM graciously gave us flash drives with some Music Achievement Council products. We also put in stuff about us. We had information on all of our people and what we do — as far as our road service, if you're a school music dealer, [we explain] who to contact in the store if you have questions about billing, who to contact if you have questions about repair, about pianos, keyboards, choral and instrumental music."

—Lori Supinie, Senseney Music

MONTHLY INDUSTRY MAG DISCUSSIONS

▶"In order to get newer sales reps and newer employees more into our industry and into our culture, we make sure that each one of our employees has a subscription to [music products industry magazines], so that they can all review those, understand the trends that are going on in our business, and then have a meeting time every month to discuss those new issues.

"Every month we get together and we discuss the trends of the business over employee lunch."

—Antonio Ferranti, Alfred Music

ROTATE YOUR WINDOW DISPLAY

▶"We have very big windows in the front of our store. I have tasked one of our part-time employees so that every third week she has to change the window in some way. And we tie it into things going on in the community.

"We make sure our windows tie into everything that happens in our community besides the things that we're doing. In some way, within three weeks, something is getting rotated and changed, so that when people are walking by in our downtown area, there's something interesting to see and possibly be curious about and then walk in and ask. And it does bring people in."

—Marcia Stearns, Bookmark Music

SPLIT INSTRUCTOR DISCOUNTS WITH STUDENTS

▶"We took the discount we were giving to the school itself, split it in half, gave one-half of the discount to the actual students of the school through an affinity program, so the administrator of the school develops, essentially, a membership card. He then took the other half of the discount, almost like an affiliate commission. We now see a lot of those actual students and parents directly, instead of the teachers coming and buying with their half [of the discount]. And they actually get a chance to get into the store."

—Mike Watson, Remenyi House of Music

GIVE EMPLOYEES A LIFEBOAT

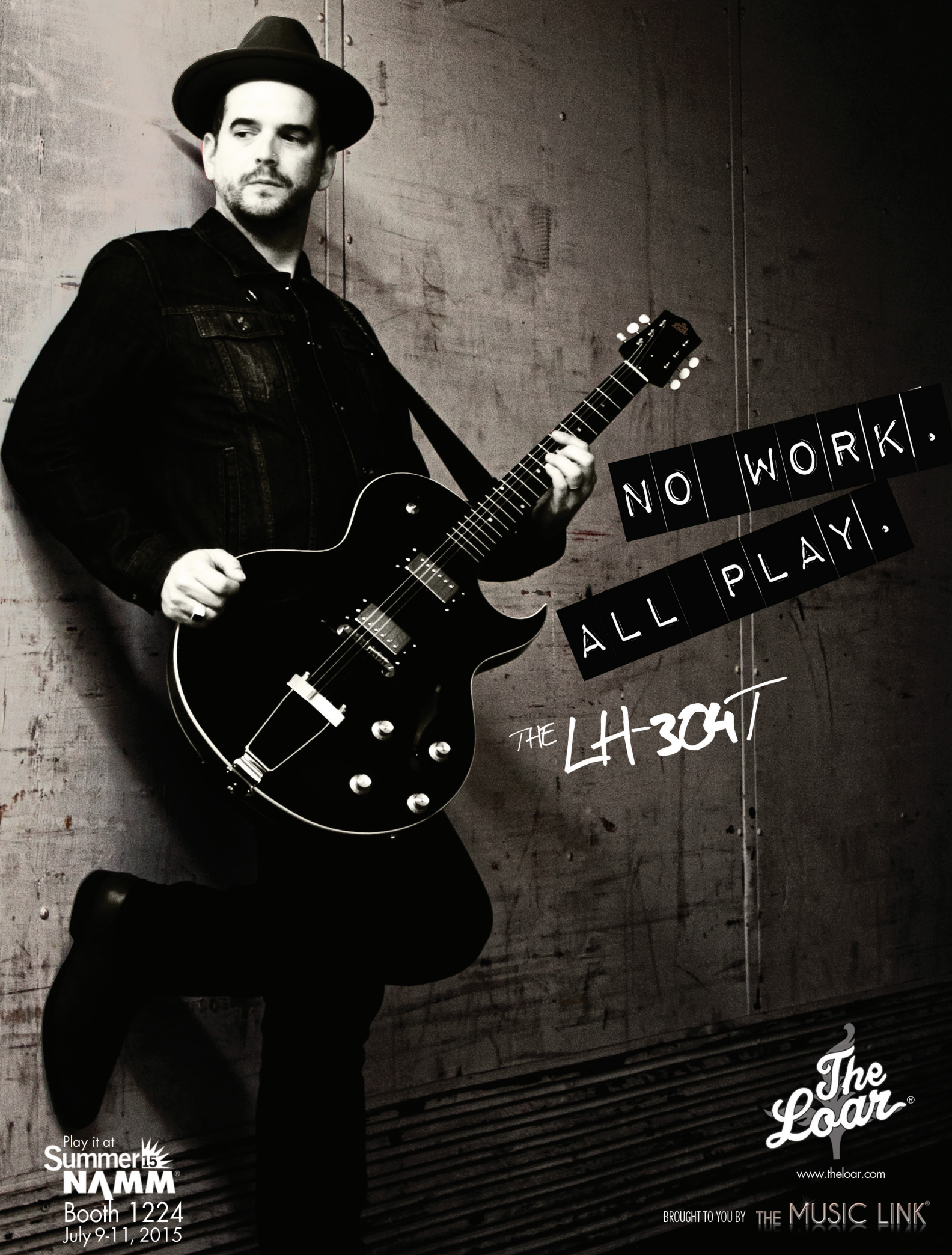
▶"We have a '$50 Lifeboat,' and all of our employees have this, so that they are empowered to spend up to $50 in any one transaction with any one customer to make it right. For example, if you're customer comes in and they asked for an estimate only on repairs, and the tech has gotten happy and fixed the instrument, and then they say, "I don't want to pay for it, you didn't give me an estimate." Or, a book comes in, it's the wrong one, and by the time the right one comes in they don't need it anymore. Each of our employees has up to $50 to say, 'That's OK. We can make it right.'

—Tracy Leenman, Musical Innovations

WINNING IDEA – PRINT MUSIC PLAYED BY BARCODE SCAN

▶ "Last month, I was in China at a music conference, and we discovered that if customers were able to listen to our music, there is probably a three-to-four times more likely chance for them to buy the book. So, on the way back, I started thinking — you go to Macy's, and you scan a barcode to find out how much a thing costs. And I said, 'Well, what if you could scan a book and hear a recording.' So, I wrote a simple little program so I can scan a barcode [and play the music in the book]."

—Matt Johnston, United Media & Music Publishers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Merchandising Magic

Some tricks of the trade to help make your print music sell itself

Bill Gray

PRINT MUSIC CAN BE TOUGH TO MERCHANDISE, ESPECIALLY IF YOUR STORE HAS A WIDE ARRAY OF TITLES. BUT THESE FEW TWEAKS TO YOUR PRODUCT DISPLAY CAN MAKE FINDING THE RIGHT TITLES FOR YOUR CUSTOMER EASIER FOR YOUR STORE'S PRINT MUSIC SPECIALIST, OR FOR THAT CUSTOMER WHO MAY NOT BE "JUST BROWSING" AFTER ALL.

WALL CHARTS

▶ When it comes to books required by school band directors, having a wall chart listing schools in the area and their method books readily available to customers can help streamline the process of finding school materials.

"Little things like this help us as salespeople," said Bill Gray of Saied Music.

PUT METHOD BOOK COVERS ON DISPLAY

▶ A wall full of print music can be intimidating to a customer who's unsure of what they're looking for. "One thing we did to really help is make copies of the covers of most of our books. As the customer walks from the front door to our [print] department, the first thing they see is these," Gray said, holding up a method book cover in a plastic sleeve. "Every method book, I've got the cover on the wall."

STRAIGHTENING THE CLOTHES

▶ Keeping your inventory alphabetized can be a daily challenge for the print department. Not only is it an absolute necessity for making titles easier for customers to find, but it can also be an opportunity for people from other departments to learn what's in stock.

"I call it 'straightening up the clothes.' It's an everyday thing. I even bring people from other departments in, because I want them to know where our print music is." MI

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SUMMER NAMM 2014 | BY KATIE KAILUS

SUMMER CHILL

From July 9–11 the MI industry will descend upon Music City for three jam-packed days of informational sessions, exhibits, concerts and the annual Top 100 Dealer Awards — along with plenty of networking opportunities.

Held at the Music City Center in Nashville, Tennessee, this year's show will debut NAMM's pro-audio education sessions called TEC Tracks, which will feature free master classes, interviews and panel discussions on the hottest topics for recording and live sound professionals, including recording techniques for the studio and stage, and optimizing live sound environments.

Another must-see event is Thursday morning's "Retail Summit." This breakfast session will feature a few Top 100 dealers as they sit down with NAMM President and CEO Joe Lamond to discuss their award-winning ideas and strategies.

This year's Summer NAMM promises lots of opportunities to do what it's best known for — networking

PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

Aside from the new TEC Tracks, the overall structure of Summer NAMM is similar to last year, therefore providing dealers many opportunities to network.

"The NAMM team has produced a tremendously valuable three days for our members," Lamond said. "Community music dealers will benefit by seeing the latest products that will be selling this fall, strategizing with their vendors on how they can both have a successful second half of the year, attending non-stop learning opportunities and joining in all the fun and live music."

Lamond said Summer NAMM attendees have an edge on the ever-changing marketplace.

"Our members have said it best, 'Going to Summer NAMM is a decision to change and seize opportunity,'" he said. "The recent *Music Inc.* 25th anniversary issue is about as powerful of an example as any to this point. Just think of the changes that have rocked the industry in the last 25 years, and we believe that the period ahead will be even more exciting. NAMM Shows are the best place to see and prepare for what's coming around the bend next." **MI**

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

All sessions held at the NAMM Idea Center, booth 654, unless otherwise noted.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

8:30 A.M.–5 P.M.

2015 Retail Boot Camp

Bob Negen, Alan Friedman and Daniel Jobe

Music City Center, 205 A–C

Arrive at Summer NAMM a day early for an intensive one-day training for music retailers. Bring the whole staff, and walk away with proven, hands-on ideas to succeed in the new way of doing business.

6 p.m.

Insight 3: An Evening of Music and Stories

Music City Center, Davidson Ballroom

This event will be hosted by country star Vince Gill and Two Old Hippies' Tom Bedell.

THURSDAY, JULY 9

BREAKFAST SESSION

8 a.m.

NAMM Retail Summit — Strategies of Top 100 Dealers

Joe Lamond, NAMM President and CEO, and Guests

Music City Center, Davidson Ballroom

Lamond will sit down with 2014's NAMM Top 100 category winners in a series of up-close, one-on-one interviews. They'll reveal their award-winning ideas and strategies. (Free breakfast is served until 8:30 a.m.)

10:30 a.m.

How to Cover All Your Bases on Google

Donovan Bankhead, Springfield Music Center

Donovan Bankhead will show you no-cost and low-cost ways to cover all your Google bases.

11 a.m.

Get Started With YouTube and Video Marketing

Ben Werlin, MusicStoreLive; Paul Decker, Music Villa; and John Mlynczak, PreSonus (Moderator)

At this session, you'll discover how to get started with video marketing and, more importantly, how to get noticed in the crowded world of YouTube and Facebook.

11:30 a.m.

Improve Your Email Marketing Now!

Bob Negen, WhizBang! Training

If you aren't using email marketing, or if your email promotions aren't paying off, join marketing and sales guru Bob Negen for this lively session.

12 p.m.

Use Instagram to Build Your Brand and Customer Base

Will Thompson, Habitual Social

Join Habitual Social founder Will Thompson as he reveals proven secrets to improve your Instagram marketing, along with effective Instagram promotions.

12:30 p.m.

Essential Tips for Selling on Amazon and eBay

Leslie Faltin, Instrumental Music Center

Listen in as Leslie Faltin shares how her store has developed a secondary income stream on Amazon and eBay.

1 p.m.

Music Lessons: Your Big Questions Answered

Kevin Cranley, Willis Music; Chris White, WhiteHouse of Music; Gayle Beacock, Beacock Music; and Daniel Jobe, Friedman, Kannenberg & Co.

This panel will reveal not only their best practices on music lessons, but also how they've solved the biggest issues that come up while running a lesson program.

1:30 p.m.

Innovative DIY Store Design Ideas You Can Use

Jamie Faletti, Santa Barbara Guitar Bar; Joel Menchey, Menchey Music; Tim Spicer, Spicer's Music; and Jen Lowe, Boom Boom Percussion (Moderator)

Join this panel of forward-thinking music retailers and discover how to add new life to your showroom with do-it-yourself store design and merchandising ideas.

2 p.m.

How We Eliminated Makeup Lessons

Carol Cook, The Music Room

Carol Cook runs a thriving lesson program at The Music Room, and she eliminated makeup lessons altogether. Best of all, students were excited about the change. Listen as she reveals her process for rolling out this change and getting everyone on board.

2:30 p.m.

How to Budget for Increased Profitability

Alan Friedman and Daniel Jobe, Friedman, Kannenberg & Co.

Join these music industry accountants as they show you how revenue, expense and cash flow budgeting can add stability to your business and ensure a healthier bottom line.

3 p.m.

Shoot an Effective Store Promotion Video — On a Shoestring

Myrna Sislen, Middle C Music

Since debuting its first store promotion video, Middle C Music has seen its community status skyrocket — not to mention its sales. Listen in as Myrna Sislen shows you her step-by-step process for creating successful promotional videos.

3:30 p.m.

5 Proven Events to Increase Traffic and Sales

Independent Music Store Owners (iMSO) Panel

Join this panel made up of iMSO group members for a fast-moving roundup of the best events in music retail.

4 p.m.

The 5 Biggest Mistakes on the Sales Floor

Greg Billings, Steinway Piano Gallery

Join Greg Billings as he looks at the five most common sales floor blunders and how you can prevent them.

4:30 p.m.

The Used and Vintage Market: What You Need to Know

George Gruhn, Gruhn Guitars

Find out what it takes to be successful in the growing used and vintage instrument market from George Gruhn, a leading expert and music retail veteran.

FRIDAY, JULY 10

BREAKFAST SESSION

8 a.m.

No More Average Marketing — How to Cut Through the Noise

Larry Bailin, Marketing Guru, Digital Pacesetter and CEO of Single Throw Internet Marketing

Music City Center, Davidson Ballroom

Online marketing is a jungle that can ravage budgets in the blink of an eye. It's never been more critical for music businesses to know what connects with customers — and what doesn't. Join Larry Bailin for

this forward-thinking breakfast session. (Free breakfast is served until 8:30 a.m.)

10:30 a.m.
Essential Tips for a Successful YouTube Channel
Chrissy Hansen, Chicago Music Exchange
Chicago Music Exchange has one of the most popular YouTube channels in music retail, boasting more than 100,000 subscribers. Learn realistic and proven ways to make video an integral part of your retail marketing strategy.

11 a.m.
7 Ways to Improve Your Website Now (Double Session)
Mike Ross, Sweetwater
Join Mike Ross for seven simple ideas you can use to improve your website right away.

12 p.m.
Simple Ways to Train Your Salespeople — In Just a Few Minutes a Day
Bob Popyk, Sales Guru
In this session, Bob Popyk will arm you with dozens of ideas to train your sales staff in just a few minutes each day.

12:30 p.m.
Effective Online Marketing Ideas From Top 100 Dealers
Menzie Pittman, Contemporary Music Center; Christie Carter, Carter Vintage Guitars; and Paul Decker, Music Villa
Join Menzie Pittman and his panel of expert retailers as they look at best practices in everything from websites to social media to Google and e-blasts.

1 p.m.
Invasion of the Lesson Snatchers — How to Keep Your Program Competitive
Pete Gamber, Music Inc. Magazine columnist; Carol Cook, The Music Room; and Menzie Pittman, Contemporary Music Center
Every day, there's more competition for your lesson program, ranging from new teaching studios to free online lessons to Skype-based learning. Listen in as this panel of lesson experts show you how to survive the attack of the "music lesson snatchers."

1:30 p.m.
10 Strategies to Maximize Your Sales and Profits With eBay
Stephen Olsen and Sierra Williams, Blues Angel Music
Join Stephen Olsen and Sierra Williams as they offer the 10 best ideas for getting more eBay sales and profits.

2 p.m.
5 Promotions to Make You the Go-to Store
Tracy Leenman, Musical Innovations
Tracy Leenman will share five low-cost, high-impact promotions and events that have put her on the map, including new ideas she didn't discuss during her session in January.

2:30 p.m.
How to Set Up and Profit From Maintenance Agreements
Robert Christie, A & G Central Music
Listen in as Robert Christie will reveal why offering maintenance agreements could be the best decision you make this year.

3 p.m.
Sure-Fire Ways to Improve Your Collections
Robin Sassi and Kimberly Deverell, San Diego Music Studio
Join Robin Sassi and Kimberly Deverell for this past-paced session on the do's and don'ts of collections.

3:30 p.m.
Create a Successful Year-Round Promotions Calendar
Brian Reardon, Monster Music
Brian Reardon will show you how he's made the most of the busy times and minimized the slow times.

4 p.m.
How We Had Our Best Year to Date
Peter Dods, Easy Music Center
Peter Dods will discuss how changes to payroll, staffing, product mix, inventory management and use of space made a huge difference to his company's sales and bottom line.

4 p.m.
NAMM YP
Music City Center, Room 205
Join NAMM YP for its bi-annual event, this time, featuring keynote speaker John D'Addario, president of D'Addario.

4:30 p.m.
Simple Ways to Tune-up Your Website
David Hall, Pro-Active Websites, and Gabriel O'Brien, Larry's Music Center
Join David Hall and Gabriel O'Brien as they give you critical questions to ask when evaluating your store's website.

6 p.m.
Top 100 Dealer Awards
Music City Center, Davidson Ballroom
Learn from fellow retailers while enjoying live music during this annual award ceremony. NAMM will name its "Dealer of the Year," as well as winners in other categories, such as "Best Emerging Dealer" and "Best Store Turnaround."

SATURDAY, JULY 11
BREAKFAST SESSION

8 a.m.
Best in Show
Frank Alkyer, Music Inc. and UpBeat Daily Magazines, and panelists
Music City Center, Davidson Ballroom
Join host Frank Alkyer and his panel of independent music retail buyers as they reveal the best products and services they saw at Summer NAMM. (Free breakfast is served until 8:30 a.m.)

10:30 a.m.
10 Tips for Killer Guitar Tone (Double Session)
Paul Riario, Guitar World Magazine
Join Paul Riario as he reveals tips, tricks and unconventional ideas for achieving that elusive guitar sound you've been dreaming of.

11:30 a.m.
One-on-One: An Interview With Hit Songwriter Tom Shapiro (Double Session)
Tom Shapiro and Laura B. Whitmore, Acoustic Nation (Interviewer)
Join Laura B. Whitmore for a one-on-one conversation with hit songwriter Tom Shapiro.

12:30 p.m.
The Pedal Summit (Double Session)
Presented by Vintage King Audio
Vintage King Audio has assembled an eclectic group of mad scientists who will be sharing their effects pedal design philosophies.

1:30 p.m.
12 PR Tips for Musicians, Music Businesses and Everyone Else
Laura B. Whitmore and Pauline France, Mad Sun Marketing
Join Mad Sun Marketing's pros on practical tips and ideas to put the power of public relations to work for you.

2 p.m.
The Insider's World of Hit Songwriting (Double Session)
Thornton Cline, Singer-Songwriter (moderator), and panel
Join Thornton Cline and his panel of songwriters for this session about the inner workings of the business.

3 p.m.
Social Media Insider Tips (Double Session)
Tom Gilbert and Laura B. Whitmore, Mad Sun Marketing
Tom Gilbert and Laura Whitmore provide insight on the best practices for a variety of social media platforms, including YouTube.

WHAT TO SEE

True Life Saver

Kyser will highlight its Lifeguard Humidifier for concert ukuleles, which easily prevents drying and cracking by maintaining a level of proper moisture within the wood on a uke. Simply immerse the unit in water, squeeze out excess, dry it off and then position it within the sound hole beneath the strings. MSRP: $19.95. **{kysermusical.com}**

Back to Bass-ics

Remo will showcase its Dorado cajons, which are designed and handcrafted in California using Birch wood and two sets of three high-quality compression springs with over 400 coils each. The Dorado cajons use traditional fixed faceplate construction, sealing the drum completely and enabling the bass tones to resonate naturally. The Dorado also features Remo's new coil spring design, which forces the coil springs against the back of the faceplate for optimum spring tension, eliminating the need to adjust wires. **{remo.com}**

Old School Cool

Recording King's new Dirty 30's Resonator delivers tons of classic style and a vintage resonator tone ideal for old-school blues and slide players. The single 0 size resonator drips with vibe, from the f-holes and tailpiece to the classic sunburst matte finish. Traditional resonator sound is delivered from a hand-spun 9.5-inch cone in a pedestal soundwell. MAP: $249.99. **{recordingking.com}**

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WHAT TO SEE

Suped Up Kit

MOD Kits DIY will showcase its MOD102+ tube amp kit. This kit expands on the same combination that's on the original MOD102 — an all-analog vacuum tube classic American circuit design with a British style Class A output section — along with some added special "+" features, including a three position progressive toggle switch for off-standby-power and an additional push-pull functionality for each control — pull out the bass control knob for "mid boost," pull out the treble control knob for "bright," pull out the volume control knob for "turbo." **{modkitsdiy.com}**

Deep Lows, Sparkly Highs

Breedlove will debut its Premier Concert Rosewood, designed for enthusiasts and working musicians as the go-to guitar for an array of genres and styles. This guitar features a solid Sitka spruce top and solid Indian rosewood back and sides, and is ideal for fingerstylists, due to its wider nut width and slim neck profile. The rosewood body provides power and depth in the lower register, while the Sitka spruce top produces sparkly highs. **{breedlovesound.com}**

Handy Hygrometer

MusicNomad's HumiReader is a humidity and temperature monitor. The HumiReader hygrometer is made to work in three ways — by hanging between the strings down into the soundhole of a guitar, placed inside its holster and attached to your instrument case wall, or set on a shelf or other flat surface to monitor the room. A bottom sensor takes a reading every 20 seconds and displays the high and low humidity level range since the last reset. **{musicnomadcare.com}**

WHAT TO SEE

Roto-molded Protection

SKB's new line of 32-channel mixer cases accommodate four popular 32-channel mixers and will replace the older bulky and heavy flight cases. The 1RMX32-DHW fits the Behringer X32 mixer, the 1RMQU32-DHW fits the Allen & Heath QU32 mixer, the 1RMM32-DHW fits the Midas M32 mixer and the 1RMTF5-DHW will accommodate the Yamaha TF5 mixer. These double walled roto-molded cases include a large rubber gasket in the lids to keep rain and moisture out with an easy-access hinged doghouse for cables, 4-inch heavy duty casters, large butterfly latches and six spring-loaded handles for easy transport. MSRP: $499.99. **{skbcases.com}**

Character Tune-up

Charactune tuners are packed with intelligent features, including presets for guitar, bass, violin and ukulele as well as a chromatic setting for just about any instrument, including fretted, stringed, brass, woodwinds, and even drums. The professional series includes upgraded features, such as a moveable A4 for when you are tuning to an instrument or a track that is not at A440, microphone or vibration tuning options, modal tuning and one model even offers a built-in metronome. **{imstechnologies.net}**

Eye-Catching Ebony

Kala will display its new Ebony series, which boasts a striking contrast of the light figured reddish-brown stripes against a deep brown body. A light maple binding on the body completes the visual first impression. When strummed, these instruments produce rich, warm and powerful tones. Kala Ebony ukuleles are available in soprano, concert, tenor sizes and a tenor with onboard EQ. MSRP: $199.99. **{kalabrand.com}**

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The Parlor Market Picks Up

By David Ball

Guitar manufacturers report a resurgent popularity in the acoustic guitar that started it all

Long before the first dreadnought was manufactured in the early 1900s, the parlor guitar was king. However, in the years since the introduction of large-bodied guitars, the tides of sonic taste have ebbed and flowed — from orchestra models, to 000s, to jumbos — with dreadnoughts serving as a constant mainstay.

Now, with even more selections to choose from than ever before, more and more guitar buyers have been going back to the original and completing their collections with guitars that have the look, feel and rich tonal features unique to parlor guitars.

Blueridge BR-371

Enter the Parlor

If you owned an American guitar at the turn of the 20th century, chances are it was a parlor guitar, which took its name from the room in which it was kept and played.

"Smaller-bodied guitars tended to be the norm [at the turn of the century] because essentially that is all that was needed when used for entertainment — whether for personal enjoyment or in a live performance setting," said David Gartland, marketing and artist relations director at Saga.

"In those early days of live performances, audiences were usually much smaller and the venues more intimate, and [music was] often performed in a parlor setting of an individual's home. There was specific music created for and played by instruments of the day, but today parlor guitars find their way into all forms of music."

Taylor's Andy Powers

Playing Nice

Although players may have previously gravitated toward the enhanced low-end resonance that large-bodied acoustics offer, advancements in modern electronics now allow for all sizes of acoustic instruments to project in just about any venue, giving players more freedom to choose an instrument that best fits one's own tonal preferences. In a band setting, this might mean choosing a small-bodied guitar to emphasize higher frequencies in the mix.

"With a lot of the styles that you're hearing and the musical settings that you're hearing acoustic guitars played in, smaller-bodied guitars play well with others," said Andy Powers, master guitar designer at Taylor. "They blend well with others, and they cut through the mix in certain settings because there's an inherent clarity and articulation you hear out of a smaller body. It emphasizes a different part of its register."

Martin 0-28VS

Generation Gap

Alongside advancements in sound technology, the rise of a new generation of consumers is morphing not only musical styles, but the aesthetic tastes involved in instrument choices. "Everybody's dad owns a dreadnought," said Fred Greene, vice president and general manager of guitars at C.F. Martin & Co. "When new generations come forward, they want to look at something other than what their parents had. They appreciate [dreadnoughts], but they want something to be their own."

Popular artists have also had a big influence on the renewed interest in parlor guitars. Greene posits that the trend began to pick up around 2012, "When John Mayer said he wanted a 00. We only made a 25-piece run, and the demand was unbelievable. We said, 'Wait a minute — he was in touch with something that we weren't really picking up on, yet.' People saw him playing it, and it was almost like getting permission." Greene went on to name Ed Sheeran and The Milk Carton Kids, who also play small-bodied guitars.

Bedell Antiquity Milagro

Small Body, Big Sound

With a distinctively narrower body (typically a 13- to 14-inch lower bout), wide neck, slotted headstock and compact scale-length, the parlor guitar looks like a mix between a Viennese Stauffer guitar and a Spanish classical. But don't be fooled by its size — parlor guitars can pack a punch.

"Most parlors are 12-fret, which moves the bridge into the center of the lower bout, where all of the vibration, all the energy, and all the music is," said Tom Bedell, founder of Bedell guitars. "By moving that bridge to the center of the lower bout, you're getting much more energy because it's right in the middle, and it's moving that piece more effectively. And it generates more efficient energy."

Alvarez APA1965

Completing the Collection

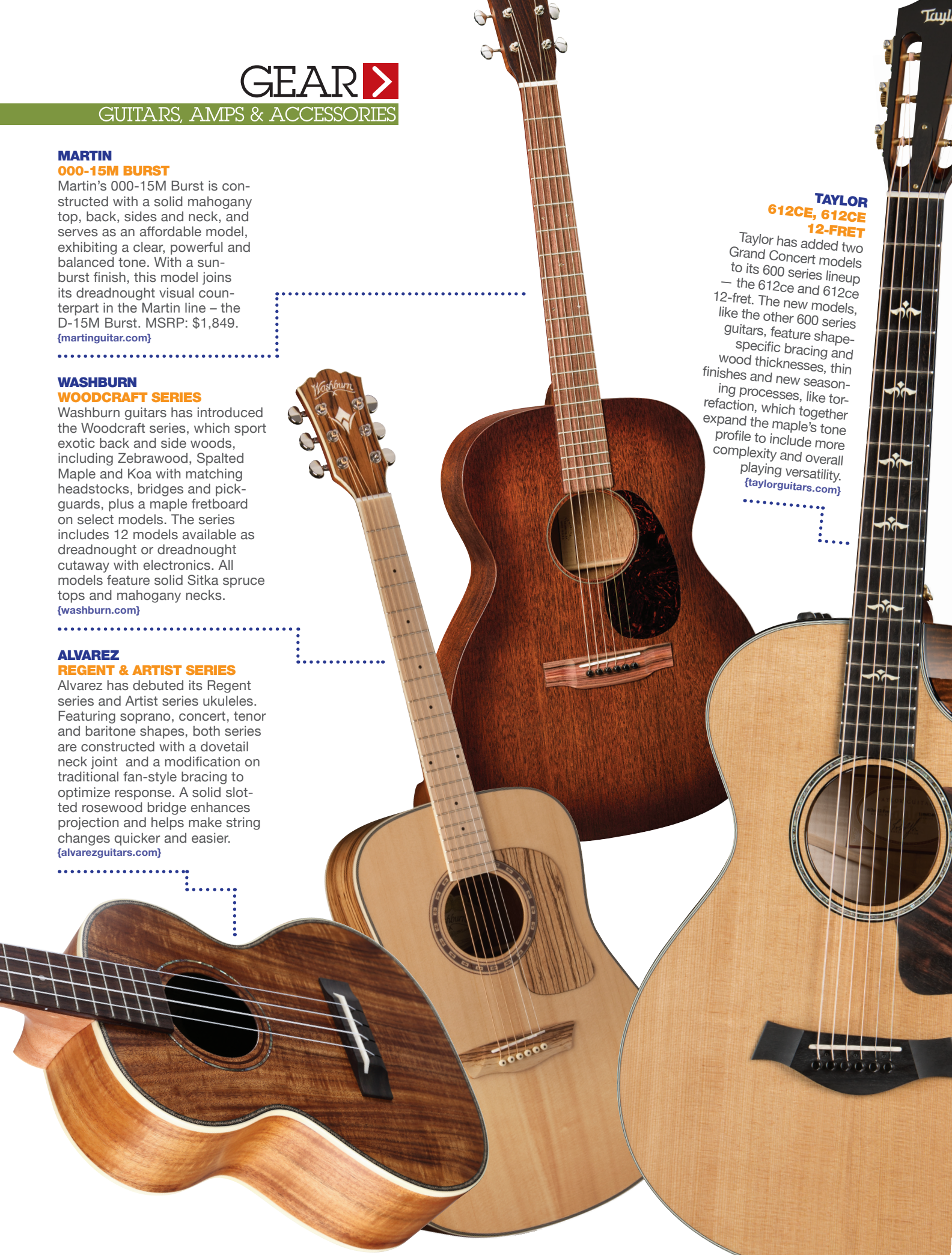
For the better part of a century, the dreadnought guitar has reigned supreme amongst acoustic players, and for some very good reasons. But for players seeking a warm, balanced tone with greater articulation and clarity on the higher end of the frequency spectrum, parlor guitars may be a better-suited option. Or, for players looking to expand the tonal capabilities of their guitar collection, the parlor can serve as a perfect second guitar. Whatever the case may be, there's always a place for a parlor in any acoustic player's arsenal. **MI**

MARTIN
000-15M BURST
Martin's 000-15M Burst is constructed with a solid mahogany top, back, sides and neck, and serves as an affordable model, exhibiting a clear, powerful and balanced tone. With a sunburst finish, this model joins its dreadnought visual counterpart in the Martin line – the D-15M Burst. MSRP: $1,849.
{martinguitar.com}

WASHBURN
WOODCRAFT SERIES
Washburn guitars has introduced the Woodcraft series, which sport exotic back and side woods, including Zebrawood, Spalted Maple and Koa with matching headstocks, bridges and pickguards, plus a maple fretboard on select models. The series includes 12 models available as dreadnought or dreadnought cutaway with electronics. All models feature solid Sitka spruce tops and mahogany necks.
{washburn.com}

ALVAREZ
REGENT & ARTIST SERIES
Alvarez has debuted its Regent series and Artist series ukuleles. Featuring soprano, concert, tenor and baritone shapes, both series are constructed with a dovetail neck joint and a modification on traditional fan-style bracing to optimize response. A solid slotted rosewood bridge enhances projection and helps make string changes quicker and easier.
{alvarezguitars.com}

TAYLOR
612CE, 612CE 12-FRET
Taylor has added two Grand Concert models to its 600 series lineup — the 612ce and 612ce 12-fret. The new models, like the other 600 series guitars, feature shape-specific bracing and wood thicknesses, thin finishes and new seasoning processes, like torrefaction, which together expand the maple's tone profile to include more complexity and overall playing versatility.
{taylorguitars.com}



LÂG
SNAKE WOOD SERIES
Lâg has debuted the new Snake Wood series of its Tramontane line, including the TSE1D, TSE1DCE and the TSE1ACE. The Snake Wood series features Mexican Snake Wood back and sides and a solid AA Sitka Spruce top. The headstock, fingerboard and bridge are constructed from Mozambica ebony, and both the TSE1DCE and TSE1ACE feature the new Fishman INK pre-amp system with Fishman's Sonicore pickup and four-band EQ.
{lagguitars.com}

HOHNER
AC03T
Hohner has released the AC03T three-quarter-size nylon string guitar with on-board tuner as part of the A+ line of student sized nylon string guitars. As a result of properly seasoned wood, pressurized gluing, special neck blocks and multi-pin body/neck joint, the AC03T is a stable, reliable student guitar with improved tactile response, accurate intonation, better tone and increased volume.
{playhohner.com}

FENDER
HELLCAT WHITE SATIN
Fender's limited edition Tim Armstrong Hellcat White Satin is a take on the beat-up old '60s Fender acoustic on which the Rancid frontman has written so many songs for his West Coast punk band. This concert-style guitar has all the elements of the original, but is now available in a white satin finish, and features a solid mahogany top, a satin-finish maple neck and onboard Fishman electronics.
{fender.com}

ERNIE BALL
SLINKY FLATWOUND
Ernie Ball has introduced its new Slinky Flatwound electric bass guitar strings. These new offerings let bass players achieve a vibrant round wound sound, paired with the smooth feel of traditional flatwound strings. The Slinky Flatwound electric bass strings are made using cobalt ribbon wire wrapped around hex cores with cobalt underwraps for enhanced clarity and projection. MSRP: $34.99.
{ernieball.com}

MONO
DUAL ACOUSTIC & ELECTRIC
The Dual Acoustic & Electric hybrid case is designed to carry one acoustic dreadnought and one electric solid-body. The Dual Acoustic & Electric case has patented features resulting in enhanced instrument protection, optimal accessibility, and reduced airline travel baggage and fees.
{monocreators.com}

ORANGE
ROCKERVERB MKIII
Orange Amplification has launched the third generation of its British built Rockerverb Series with the Orange Rockerverb MKIII. Available in 50- and 100-watt head formats, or as a 50-watt 2 by 12-inch combo, the versatile twin channel layout has been reworked, with a re-voiced non-master clean channel. Combined with a more usable valve-driven spring reverb, the MKIII produces an abundance of rhythm tones via a new two band EQ.
{orangeamps.com}

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AURALEX
HOVERDECK V2

Auralex's HoverDeck V2 is the latest upgrade of its ISO series drum and percussion isolation platform. Th HoverDeck V2 is engineered to reduce coloration from floor resonance by coupling the drum kit or percussion setup from the structure, resulting in a tighter, purer sound.
{auralex.com}

GENELEC
1234 SAM SYSTEM

Genelec's 1234 Smart Active Monitoring system is designed to achieve accurate and powerful sound reproduction in demanding recording and mixing environments. The 1234 SAM system has a system frequency response from 29 Hz to 21 kHz and is capable of delivering 125 dB SPL at 1 meter through a combination of efficient Class D amplifiers. The system is also supplied with a RAM XL (Remote Amplifier Module).
{genelecusa.com}

FOCUSRITE
EXPANDED REDNET RANGE

Focusrite has introduced four second-generation models from its RedNet line of products based around the Dante audio-over-IP networking system — the MP8R 8-channel remote-controlled mic pre and the D16R AES interface, plus the HD32R HD Bridge for Pro Tools and D64R MADI. Interoperable with all other Dante-compatible units, these RedNet interfaces are designed for live sound and broadcast applications.
{focusrite.com}

IMS TECHNOLOGIES
CHRISTOPHER SPEAKERS
IMS Technologies' Christopher Speakers are three-way system mastering speakers. Designed with high-quality components, these speakers use large magnets, motor structured and voice coils for accuracy and faithful audio reproduction. Each speaker is hand built in the United States and designed to compete with comparable speakers for a fraction of the price.
{imstechnologies.net}

DBX
GORACK
Dbx's goRack performance processor is a loudspeaker management processor that enables sound-quality optimization of a portable P.A. system. The goRack incorporates the best of dbx's DriveRack series processing simplified down to its purest form, in a compact unit that fits into the palm of the hand.
{dbxpro.com}

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Vic Firth's High Tension Drum Key provides the added leverage needed to tune drums in any high-tension environment. The plastic grip conforms easily to the hand, making tuning comfortable. Plus, the High Tension Drum Key comes with a carabiner for easy clip-on accessibility. MSRP: $24.95.
{vicfirth.com}

TAMA
STAR WALNUT
Tama has added a set of 100-percent Walnut drums to its flagship line, the STAR series. Outfitted with all the appointments found on the company's maple and Bubinga STAR drums, the Walnut kits include six-ply toms and snare drums along with a seven-ply bass drum to showcase the Walnut's rich lows and focused attack.
{tama.com}

TRX
DRK SERIES
TRX has introduced its DRK series, a redesign of one of the company's original lines developed for players who desire warmer, darker, classic cymbal sounds without sacrificing the power and projection of contemporary styles. DRK cymbals are ultra-thin, featuring a natural finish with deep lathing and heavy hammering.
{trxcymbals.com}

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SCHILKE
ST21
Schilke has introduced the ST21 large bore symphonic tenor to its trombone line. The ST21 features .547-inch bore and offers a fixed bell configuration with either a Schilke designed rotary valve or Rene Hagmann free flow valve, and is available with a choice of yellow or gold brass 8 1/2-inch hand hammered bells.
{schilkemusic.com}

VANDOREN
BD5
Vandoren has released the Black Diamond Ebonite BD5 B-flat clarinet mouthpiece, available in standard pitch and 13 series. Offering clarinet players clarity, depth and presence, the BD5 features a unique chamber with a sound unlike traditional mouthpieces.
{dansr.com}

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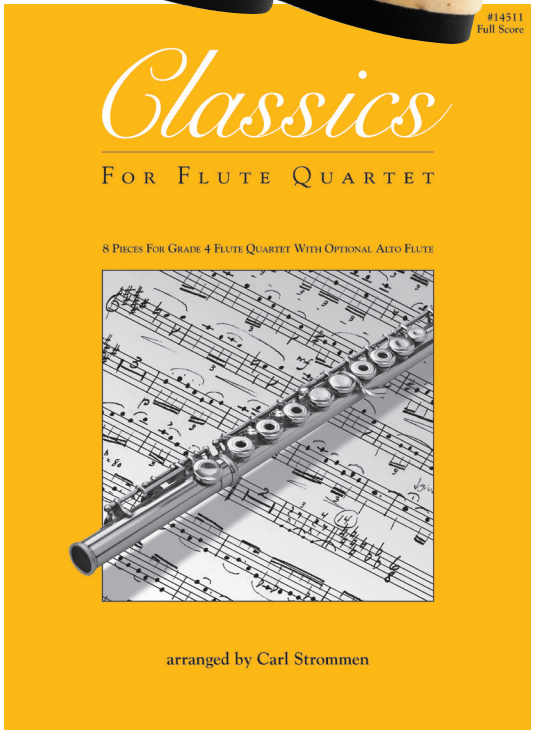

KENDOR
'CLASSICS FOR FLUTE QUARTET'
Kendor has released *Classics For Flute Quartet*, a collection carefully selected and arranged by Carl Strommen to fit the needs of grade 4 flute quartets. Titles include: Beethoven's "Bagatelle," Saint-Saëns' "Dance" (from *Samson and Delilah*) and Bach's "Fugue VII" (from *The Well Tempered Clavier, Book 2*).
{kendormusic.com}

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CHAUVET
INTIMIDATOR
Chauvet DJ's Intimidator Wave 360 IRC features four tilting RGBW heads mounted on a single rotating base to produce a non-stop visual aerial effect. Each of the Intimidator's heads is powered by a 12-watt Quad-Color (red, green, blue, white) LED with a narrow 5-degree beam angle, creating bright, tightly focused aerial beams.
{chauvetlighting.com}

AKG
K181 DJ UE
AKG by Harman has introduced the K181 DJ UE (Ultimate Edition) reference class DJ headphones, developed based on input from professional DJs. The K181 DJ UE headphones feature a closed back design and a 50-mm transducer, delivering enough power to withstand strong P.A. speakers, especially for pre-fader listening.
{akg.com}

BLIZZARD
LIL' G
Blizzard's Lil' G is a powerful moving mini spot head, packed with many of the same features found in larger professional moving head fixtures. The Lil' G has a 40-watt LED light source with 9-degree optics that can produce nine gobo patterns, seven colors, bi-directional color/gobo rotation, rainbow effects and gobo shake.
{blizzardlighting.com}

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What was your biggest takeaway from RPMDA 2015?

Photo by Richard Rejino

Carol Wilbur
Pender's Music
Carrolton, Texas

My biggest goodwill feeling is something that started the year before when we were trying to reorganize to make RPMDA more relevant and more current with people's needs, and trying to expand people's knowledge of our niche in the overall music industry. People wanted to get involved. They wanted to help, and there's just too much to be done for a board to be able to do. But when you bring the membership in and everybody — publishers and retailers alike — have the same vested interest, then that pulling together is what's going to keep us around in the future.

And there were some surprise sessions. For instance the ASCAP session. It's important because as an owner, or a purchaser, or a publisher you need to know what copyright involves. With that session, the person who gave it was briefed by the CEO of Hal Leonard, Keith Mardak. Several people asked if we could put it on the website and all the reviews were great.

Adam Jones
BandLand
Clarksburg, West Virginia

During [the tour of] Family Music Center, one of the guitar teachers there was hanging around while I was talking with Maribeth [Barrons] from Hal Leonard. She got to talking with him, and with the way that she was asking him questions, and stuff that she was recommending to him for his students, it was really great for me to see her. She's such a great salesperson. She knows their product catalog so well. She was basically getting him to ask the questions that she wanted to answer.

I've taken some of those things away to be able to use at my own store, [as a result of] her talking with an actual customer, who's a teacher. And our teachers are probably the most important customers in our business.

I think [last year's decision to give suppliers equal membership privileges] has definitely been a good thing for the organization. I don't see any downside at all, since [publishers] are a really important part of it. That's how we both succeed.

Bob Kohl
Long & McQuade
Vancouver, British Columbia

The biggest takeaway was opening up that very important, yet scary topic: What is the future of the print music industry, and how are we metamorphosing with the advance of technology? What does that mean for tomorrow's delivery vehicle and what tomorrow's customer base is going to look like?

Also, [looking at]what kind of role print will continue to have as far as the future of music education. That was a big part of the final sessions in the convention — the whole need for our continuing advocacy in order to support education in our schools, because the most essential tool for music education is print music, and a great method book and great repertoire. It's a constant consumable, and it's a steady traffic driver.

I really enjoyed all of the sessions that I went to. Sometimes it's so hard, because without the sessions being repeated again, especially with the breakout sessions, having to choose one of three that look really good and interesting — it can sometimes be really tough to make your decision.

I thought that Lori Supinie did an outstanding job with the inventory session called "Turn, Turn, Turn," just breaking it down to the core essential principles you need to look at in order to manage your inventory. The fact that, in order to stay profitable, you have to turn [inventory], and knowing what a healthy turn ratio is, and how to analyze which areas of your department are performing really well, and what areas need attention and need to have their performance improved.

It was an outstanding event for me personally, and I am really honored and humbled by the awards that I received. More than anything, it just makes me more motivated than ever to try to live up to that high standard. **MI**

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