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FOR SUCCESSFUL MUSIC RETAILERS

MAY 2021  
MUSICMAG.COM

# music



## *Pianos Float Up*

How acoustic piano sales – through it all –  
rose during the pandemic | **PAGE 26**

## THE COMEBACK KID

Live audio, hit hard by COVID-19,  
prepares to reemerge | **PAGE 32**

Downtown Piano Works'  
Dan & Theresa Shykind





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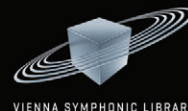
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Cypher Shah

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Billy Cuthrell



Brad Boynton

Cover photo provided by Jamie Turner.



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● The AMERICAN ACOUSTASONIC JAZZMASTER shown in Ocean Turquoise. Iconic acoustic voicings. Big electric tones. One powerful Blend Knob.



# PERSPECTIVE

PERSPECTIVE | BY DANIEL MARGOLIS

## ON CONTAINMENT

This May issue of Music Inc. was developed during a time that couldn't help but bring up some severe memories. A year ago, we were in the process of developing our May 2020 issue when the coronavirus became a thing, so to speak. On March 12, 2020, the NBA suspended its season and the NCAA tournament was canceled — all over the pandemic. This is not to say basketball defines our world (or does it?), but it was two among many things at the time signaling that life as we knew it was over, at least for a while. That same day, we shelved a completed cover story to write a chronological, source-driven timeline of the start of the pandemic.

And looking back at that issue, everything in it, save for that article, reflects what

some call “the before times.” This included our Ask the Retailer page. I'd asked drum shops, “Are you planning to celebrate International Drum Month?” in May, and people had described things to me that, through no fault of their own, were not going to be able to happen. Rhythm Traders Drum Shop's Brad Boynton, who has an excellent column in this issue on page 21 about how the pandemic has changed shoppers' habits, described to me his store's annual event: “It's very social.” Not anymore.

So I returned to the question for this issue, asking, “How will you celebrate International Drum Month in May, despite the pandemic?” I also returned to Ray Fransen's Drum Center's Ray Fransen, who'd also shared his soon-to-be-canceled plans with me a year ago. He was,

understandably, on the fence about International Drum Month, and pointed to a reason for this: “I'd be afraid to promote something and then not be able to get the merchandise. There's a lot of stuff that's getting hung up in the ports on the West Coast, and there's even an international shortage of containers right now.”

Shipping containers are oddly the antagonist of this issue. For our cover story on page 26, I looked into how acoustic piano sales have fared over the last year. We hadn't showcased the piano market on our cover since May 2018, back when pandemic was 100 years in our past, not our present and future. When I talked to suppliers, one of the first things I wanted to ask about was supply chain challenges. Perhaps naively, I imagined these would involve parts of pianos. No, the problem is what you put pianos in — shipping containers. One company after another — Yamaha, Steinway, Kawai, Hailun — brought up containers, in particular a giant blockage at the port in Long Beach, California, which seems to be rising to everyone's attention. On March 31, a day before this issue is going to press, the Wall Street Journal posted an article titled, “America's Imports Are Stuck on Ships Floating Just Off Los Angeles,” stating, “Tens of thousands of containers holding millions of dollars' worth of goods are stuck offshore, within sight of docks jammed with still more containers.”

Our May 2020 cover story noted that on March 9, the Grand Princess cruise ship docked in Oakland, California, under coronavirus quarantine. So, a year ago, we were all concerned about a ship landing on our coast, and understandably so. But one year later, we want ships of a different type to dock so we can get product out of them, into our shops and in customers' hands, in many cases to help them cope with life in lockdown. What a difference a year makes. **MI**



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# LETTERS

## Come Together

Thanks to Music Inc. magazine for the excellent coverage of NAMM's Believe in Music Week. Even though there's no replacement for in-person NAMM Shows, we were thrilled to see our industry family come together this past January to support each other and those who bring music to the world.

We've since heard from countless NAMM members who benefitted from the hundreds of educational and brand sessions at the event. As mentioned in Music Inc., many of those industry professionals implemented the strategies, tactics and tips from the education in real time, not to mention shared the new ideas with everyone on their teams. This trend wasn't limited to the U.S. either, as we saw a record number of global members convening to learn and develop new business relationships. Of course, we also saw bustling activity and new-product introductions in the Marketplace, along with special events on Believe in Music TV, such as the TEC Awards and Parnelli Awards retrospectives and the NAMM Top 100 Dealer Awards.

On a related note, we're proud to keep the education going year-round on NAMM U Online, or [namm.org/nammu](http://namm.org/nammu). There, you'll find a selection of the Believe in Music sessions, along with exclusive, better-business articles and videos. Just glancing at recent NAMM U Online sessions reveals insights on everything from virtual music lessons, podcasting, improving the customer experience, new website technologies and bolstering cash flow. Dig in a little more and you'll also find classic NAMM U Breakfast Sessions, interviews with top industry thought leaders and highlights from past NAMM shows and Summer NAMM presentations.



Thanks again for joining us during Believe in Music. We can't wait to see you again — and in-person next time.

*Zach Phillips*  
Director of Professional Development  
NAMM  
Carlsbad, California

## Adapted to Radical Changes

Many thanks to Music Inc.'s Daniel Margolis for his coverage of Believe in Music Week. I had always thought MI was old-fashioned, so it has been a pleasant surprise to see how quickly MI companies have adapted to the radical changes of the last year. The quotes in his articles "Seeing is Believing" and "Guitar Booms" really drive that point home. Even in these turbulent times, we can continue to meet our customer's needs with optimism, agility and creative solutions. Thanks as well

for recognizing our Vox Bobcat S66 Bigsby, featured in our virtual booth, with an Editor's Choice Award! Our goal for this series of guitars is to bring the innovative spirit of Vox's vintage instruments into the present — and the future. Times and tastes change, but people clearly still believe in music. We believe they always will.

*Eric Kirkland*  
Director of Vox Guitar  
Product Development  
Korg USA  
Melville, New York

## The End of an Era

I first met Lloyd McCausland more than 50 years ago at a NAMM show in the summer of 1968 or '69. I delivered a message to him from another junior executive and he rewarded me with a Remo drumhead tie clip. Little did I know that I had just met a life-long mentor and friend and

a man who would profoundly influence the future of not only my career but the entire drum industry.

A few years later, I moved to Los Angeles to attend college and, to my surprise, the man I had met in Chicago was running the local chapter of the Percussive Arts Society. After getting involved at his invitation, I became his replacement — although he was never out of touch when I needed help. In 1974, I was invited to be one of Lloyd's assistants for the first-ever PAS convention held in Anaheim, California. And, after I graduated and was struggling to find work as a young percussionist in L.A., Lloyd invited me to take a part-time job at Remo. Towards the end of the '80s, Lloyd called to invite me to get involved with International Drum Month — an industry-wide market development project he had almost single-handedly created. Our IDM activities led to the creation of the Percussion Marketing Council in 1995. Then, for several years in the late 1990s, I again teamed up with Lloyd after he opened the door for me to become the corporate advertising and marketing consultant for Remo.

The drum business has seen its ups and downs over the years but, when Lloyd passed away on January 26 due to complications caused by COVID-19, it was truly the end of an era. Although he may not have been a Remo or a Ludwig or a Firth or a Zildjian, Lloyd was just as much a catalyst and, from where I stand, he'll be missed.

*Dave Levine*  
Owner  
Full Circle Management  
Executive Director  
Hit Like A Girl  
Studio City, California


EDITOR'S NOTE: MUSIC INC. ENCOURAGES LETTERS AND RESPONSES TO ITS STORIES. EMAIL LETTERS TO [EDITOR@MUSICINC.MAG.COM](mailto:EDITOR@MUSICINC.MAG.COM).



# We Believe in the Music Products Industry...

And the people who bring music to the world.

We believe in the power of music for every person and salute those that manufacture, distribute, teach and perform music. The opportunity to gather together to learn, support and inspire each other is just what we all need—now more than ever. We are proud to be a part of Summer NAMM because we are stronger together, and the experience energizes, motivates and encourages us all to keep doing what we all do: Make lives better through music.



**Cindy and Rand Cook**

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[namm.org/attend](http://namm.org/attend)

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# INDUSTRY

## NEWS

## FENDER INTRODUCES ACOUSTASONIC JAZZMASTER

Fender has launched the American Acoustasonic Jazzmaster, which the brand states is its most sonically diverse guitar to date.

Launched in the '60s, the original Jazzmaster guitar model was one of Fender's first body shapes and featured a tremolo string system — an arched string system to make acoustic sounds louder. Now an iconic guitar played by artists and bands such as Elvis Costello and Sonic Youth, its design has been refined for more than 60 years to create the American Acoustasonic Jazzmaster. The Acoustasonic Jazzmaster follows the American Acoustasonic Stratocaster and American Acoustasonic Telecaster.

"The Jazzmaster spans multiple different genres, where a Tele might be originally have been pigeonholed to more country-esque-style music. The Strat was more like rock music," said Billy Martinez, vice president of Fender Acoustic and Squier Divisions. "The Jazzmaster allowed people to decide where they wanted it to fit within their music. That thought process took part of what we were thinking in the Acoustasonic Jazzmaster and really took it to a different level as far as how do we take this and make it, quote-unquote, the rowdy sibling to what the Strat and Tele offer. The Jazzmaster opened up a whole new lane from jazz to punk to a lot of things in between, which obviously is all part of the background when we were sitting down designing it."



According to Fender, the American Acoustasonic Jazzmaster's appeal is its ability to sound like 10 different Fender guitars — five acoustic, five electric and any combination in between, all accessed via a single Blend knob. The technology to deliver these sounds took five years of R&D from Fender, which developed many new features including an acoustic engine, ergonomic nuances to enhance playability, hybrid tone options and new colorways that are exclusive to this model.

"We really took a different approach here and actually gave the Jazzmaster first its own set of unique voices, but allowed

the size of the body shape and the cavity to drive decision-making on how we wanted the electronics to actually perform and what we wanted them to offer to the player," Martinez said. "If you think along the lines of an acoustic guitar, each different body shape offers that player a different type of tone. You layer in different tone woods that affect the tone in addition to the body shape. I would harken back to what a true acoustic does, which is each body shape has its own unique sound. And that's something that we want to embrace even within Acoustasonic."

[fender.com](https://www.fender.com)



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Chris Johnson | Drummer | Camila Cabello  
Edwin Carranza | Bassist, MD | Camila Cabello  
Darek Cobbs | Keyboards, MD | Charlie Puth  
Wayne Miller | Host | LA Songwriters Collective Podcast

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Students from Upperman High School in Baxter, Tennessee, shown playing a new DW drum kit and a practice pad, which were part of a recent grant from the Guitar Center Music Foundation.

## Guitar Center Raises over \$500K to Assist Music Programs in Need

The Guitar Center Music Foundation, a non-profit organization focused on granting instruments and equipment to music education and music therapy programs, announced it received more than \$500,000 via a series of Guitar Center's in-store and online fundraising initiatives known as the Round Up Your Change program, with all funds used to help music education programs. During these fundraising drives, Guitar Center customers were given the option of donating to the Guitar

Center Music Foundation by rounding up their purchase to the nearest dollar, giving customers an easy way to support music education during the challenging times of the current pandemic crisis.

From July 5 to Aug. 1 and Sept. 7 to Dec. 31, 2020, the Round Up Your Change programs were highly successful, with 52% of Guitar Center customers opting to donate, with a total of 829,320 transactions at an average donation of 61 cents. With these donations, 28 music programs across the

country have been able to receive grants so far, with more planned for 2021. The music programs that benefited from the Round Up donations include Upperman High School in Baxter, Tennessee; Newton County Middle School in Decatur, Mississippi; Jordan High School in Los Angeles; Norfolk Middle School in Norfolk, Nebraska; among others.

The musicians at Upperman High School saw a difficult 2020. In addition to the pandemic, the school's community of Baxter was ravaged by tornadoes on March 3, 2020, and a number of other tragedies resulted in the loss of multiple members of the school's tight family. The school's Choir Director and Commercial Music Instructor Emily Phillips was especially thankful for the instrument grant, which included new guitars, new keyboards for the practice rooms, and a full complement of drums and practice pads. Before students had been using buckets for percussion.

"Music participation is an essential element in the fabric of our society," said Wayne Colwell, Guitar Center executive vice president of store operations. "We are grateful to the over 800,000 customers who helped us raise more than \$500,000 in 2020. Guitar Center is dedicated to ensuring that music is an integral part of as many lives as possible."

The most recent Guitar Center Round Up Your Change initiative ran from Feb. 28 to March 27. ([guitarcenter.com](https://www.guitarcenter.com))

## REVERB REPORTS MOST SUCCESSFUL HOLIDAY SEASON FOR SELLERS TO DATE

Reverb has announced its sellers experienced their biggest holiday to date on Reverb.com, with fourth quarter gross merchandise sales up more than 32% compared to the same period last year. Many of those buyers connected with sellers on Reverb, which saw significant sales growth across guitars, microphones, audio interfaces and other recording equipment, synthesizers and drum machines, among other categories, in 2020.

"After a year that was challenging for so many in our industry, it was inspiring to see our seller community end the year strong, as more consumers shopped for musical instruments online than in stores," said Reverb CEO David Mandelbrot, who noted that searches for small keyboards and synthesizers on Reverb more than

doubled when compared to the same time last year. "Over the past year, our team worked to introduce and improve seller tools, help dealers get more inventory online, create marketing campaigns that drive buyers to our sellers, and more. As a result, when buyers looked for musical instruments online over the holidays, they found our sellers and their inventory."

Ahead of the holiday shopping season, Reverb introduced two new features that helped sellers increase sales while providing a more seamless shipping experience for buyers and sellers: Free Shipping Thresholds, which let sellers offer free shipping to buyers that spend at or above an amount set by the seller, as well as Reverb's new Combine and Save feature enabling sellers to offer discounted or free shipping to buy-

ers purchasing multiple qualifying items.

The Reverb team also worked with sellers throughout 2020 to make it easier to integrate their e-commerce platforms with their Reverb shops. Integrations let sellers manage listings, inventory and orders on their website and in their Reverb shop from one central location. This enables sellers to increase their listings and grow sales.

While Reverb has long been known as a marketplace for used, unique and vintage instruments, in 2020 buyers bought more new gear from Reverb sellers than ever before. ([reverb.com](https://www.reverb.com))

**Reverb**



# GIBSON PARTNERS WITH UMPG IN CHINA

Gibson has announced it has formed a full-scale partnership with Universal Music Publishing Group — the world's second largest music publishing company — in China and Hong Kong. With a catalog of over three million songs and offices in 46 countries worldwide, UMPG is part of the Universal Music Group, a subsidiary of Vivendi and Tencent.

Gibson will offer tailor-made support for artists, songwriters and producers in China. First up for 2021 are the UMPG songwriting camps and artist events. Gibson has outfitted UMP China's professional recording studios in Beijing and Shanghai and UMP China marketing and social media will work closely with Gibson in expanding social media reach via joint promotional social campaigns and artist content launches regionally and globally. UMPG and Gibson are committed to supporting charity campaigns and causes that serve the music community, from forthcoming opportunities with major content sites, such as Tencent, TikTok and Bilibili, to promoting respective artists' charitable efforts globally and



UMP China Managing Director Joe Fang (left) and Gibson China sales director Wells Wang (right) congratulate the top three songwriting camp winners.

regionally throughout Asia.

"We are very excited about the emerging partnership between Gibson and UMPG China to further our support for musicians and for the broader music community in China," said James "JC" Curleigh, president and CEO of Gibson Brands. "We have amazing momentum around the world, and now we have an incredible opportunity to take this momentum to another level with

our new partnership in China."

"I'm excited to announce that UMPG China will be partnering with Gibson, the number one guitar brand in the world," said Joe Fang, managing director of UMPG China. "With Gibson's support, we will now have the chance to jointly promote emerging artists, support music education, and create causes for music education and charity events." [gibson.com](https://www.gibson.com)

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## **D'ADDARIO DONATES 40K FACE SHIELDS**

D'Addario has donated 40,000 Dynatome Face Shields to help safeguard organizations across Long Island, New York. On Feb. 26, Suffolk County Legislator Tom Cilmi and Presiding Officer Robert Calarco met with D'Addario CEO John D'Addario III to accept a portion of the donated face shields on behalf of Suffolk County's 18 legislative districts.

"The Suffolk County Legislature has been heavily involved with securing and distributing PPE to constituents in need. We are grateful to D'Addario for this generous donation and to Legislator Tom Cilmi for helping to arrange it," Calarco said.

A year ago, D'Addario was directed to close its Farmingdale factories by the State of New York. A small group of D'Addario product development and manufacturing engineers, led by Chief Innovation Officer Jim D'Addario, met to find a way to make medical face shields from materials normally used to make Evans Drumheads. Today, two million face shields have been shipped to medical professionals, small business owners and consumers across North America. [daddario.com](https://daddario.com)

## **Key Leaves Partners with Better Sax**

Woodwind accessory maker Key Leaves has partnered with alto saxophone manufacturer Better Sax to include its flagship Key Leaves care product with every new saxophone purchase. Designed by Jay Metcalf, YouTube saxophone educator and founder of BetterSax.com, the Better Sax alto saxophone is, according to a statement from the company, "a strikingly styled instrument built to last and priced affordably."

"We are excited to offer the Key Leaves care product with each Better Sax because by using this simple device players will free themselves from sticky keys and increase the longevity of their pads," Metcalf said. "I was skeptical about Key Leaves at first, but quickly realized how much of a positive impact they have." [keyleaves.com](https://keyleaves.com)

# Hal Leonard Adds Snark Tuners, Danelectro Pedals, Honeytone Amps

Snark tuners, Danelectro pedals and Honeytone Mini Amps are now available through Hal Leonard MI Products Distribution. Steve Ridinger, president of Evets Corporation worked with Brad Smith, vice president of MI products with Hal Leonard, to add Hal Leonard as one of Evets' distributors for the U.S. as of last month.

All three lines are owned by Evets Corporation. Hal Leonard will offer all models of the Snark Tuner.

"Hal Leonard is well known as the number one print music publisher and as a reliable dealer source for a growing stable of musical instrument products and accessories," Ridinger said. "We welcome Hal Leonard to our family of distributors and look forward to working together."

"Evets has created these reliable, affordable products that are amazing store traffic builders," Smith said. "Our mission at HL MI Products is to support our dealers and make it easy to bring in the right mix whenever they order from us." ([halleonard.com](http://halleonard.com))



Left to right: Massimo Barbini, Chief Sales & Marketing Officer, Zoom Corporation, Japan; Dan Gallagher, Senior Vice President Sales, Zoom North America; Scott Goodman, CEO, Zoom North America; and Masahiro Iijima, CEO, Zoom Corporation, Japan.

## Zoom North America Achieves Record 2020 Sales

Zoom North America, the U.S. subsidiary of Zoom Corporation, Japan, has announced sales of \$42.75 million for its fiscal year 2020 — a 20 % increase over the previous year.

With the continued advancement of digital content creation and engagement, several key product categories were responsible for the growth.

Sales of cameras increased 250 % as online learning delivered an unprecedented demand for webcams offering pro-quality audio and video. Digital mixers, multi-track recorders and mobile microphones all saw triple digit sales increases, and sales of multi-effects processors were up 70 %, as more musicians stayed home and experimented with new effects for guitars, acoustic instruments and vocals.

In Q4 of 2020, Zoom started shipping its PodTrak P4 and P8 Recorders — the company's first recorders designed specifically for podcasters. According to Zoom, along with the ZDM-1 Podcast Mic Pack, the new category played a significant role in the company's growth. ([zoomcorp.com](http://zoomcorp.com))



# THE ORIGINAL.



## Industry Vet Launches DrumSellers.com

Aiming to revive the traditions and values of the classic drum shop in an online experience, industry veteran George Lawrence has launched DrumSellers.com, a marketplace and community where drummers, drum retailers and drum manufacturers can promote and sell their new, used and vintage gear. While DrumSeller's online listings feature product images, videos and descriptions that are seen by a global audience, the website also offers educational content covering tuning,

head selection, maintenance and more.

A former drum shop owner, Lawrence is also a successful touring and recording drummer, teacher, drum builder and publisher of Not So Modern Drummer magazine.

According to Lawrence, DrumSellers is intended to be a modern, online version of the independent drum shop. DrumSellers states that it will aim to offer almost concierge-style service for one low sales commission.

{drumsellers.com}



### Products and Packages with FREE FREIGHT



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## IN MEMORIAM



Colleen Summerhays

### COLLEEN SUMMERHAYS PASSES AWAY

Colleen Summerhays of Summerhays Music in Utah passed away in February.

In a 2009 NAMM Oral History interview, Summerhays recalled walking into her local music store in 1940 to inquire about a clerical position and meeting her future husband, Hy Summerhays, who had opened the retail shop four years earlier.

They married and worked together during the difficult years after World War II, when instruments such as the piano were difficult to obtain. In the interview, Summerhays reminisced about her husband traveling to nearby states to buy used pianos and bringing them back to Utah, where the market was beginning to flourish as soldiers returned home to marry and start families.

## TASCAM Celebrates 50th Anniversary

TASCAM is celebrating the company's 50th anniversary in 2021.

As the professional audio division of TEAC Corporation, TASCAM's heritage dates back to the late 1960s when the Tani brothers — both engineers — and Dr. Abe, a senior engineer at TEAC, formed a special R&D group named TEAC Audio Systems Corp. for the purpose of researching ways to apply TEAC's recording technology for musicians and recording studios. In 1971, TASCAM America Corp. was established for the purpose of distributing TASC products in the U.S. and conducting additional market research. Then, in 1974, TASCAM was absorbed by the growing TEAC Corp. of America sales and distribution company, and TASCAM became the official brand name of all TEAC recording products designed specifically for musicians and recording studios. Many TASCAM products have a rich history, with its 80-8 tape deck being used to record the voices of R2-D2 and C-3PO in the making of the first Star Wars movie. {tascam.com}



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# IDEAS

THE RETAIL DOCTOR | BY BILLY CUTHRELL

## The New Combo Store

My grandmother got her hair done religiously for years at a place called May Belle's Hair Salon. One day I drove my grandmother to her hair appointment and noticed the sign on the door read, May Belle's Hair Salon and Chainsaw Repair. I thought it was a joke but come to find out May Belle's husband had been forced into early retirement and to keep money coming in he wanted to open a small engine repair business. May Belle decided to join forces with her husband and put his repair shop in the back of her hair salon. May Belle's shop was small and the concept seemed odd. Women getting their hair set had to smell gas fumes and engine noise seeping out from behind the curtain in the back of the shop, but the crazy combo worked. Husbands would bring in their chainsaws and other mechanical problems while their wives conversed.

In every crisis there is opportunity and May Belle and her husband saw their opportunity and grabbed it. There was opportunity in the 1920s as the country emerged from the pandemic of 1918 and opportunities in 2010 as we navigated out of a recession. Now, as we think ahead to what retail looks like as the world emerges from



**It's time for  
MI retailers  
to start  
rethinking.**

the pandemic, we find many of the habits formed in the last year will stick around, possibly forever, and what worked for you in March 2019 is probably much different a few years later. Band rentals may be soft or completely obsolete, while acoustic guitar sales have skyrocketed. Maybe sales are down in every category and it's time to look at a new retail combination that appeals to a larger group of customers. By diversifying your operation you will attract a customer group that may not know they are in the market for

a new guitar or drum set. The key is finding your opportunity for new growth.

Here's an example. In 2010, I wanted to build out a coffee bar in one of my locations and rebrand my store as an upscale coffee bar that happened to have a great music store in it. I wanted to cultivate a new customer by getting them in the door to buy a great cup of coffee and then introduce them to a musical lifestyle. After several months of working on this new concept, I was told by city officials that my coffee bar was not allowed under the current zoning regulations in that location. It was a setback but I managed to pull it off in another location. We did generate a lot of sales from customers who had no interest in playing music until they popped in a few times to grab a cup of coffee and a guitar hanging on the wall grabbed their attention and they started taking lessons — and buying more high margin cups of coffee.

It's the right time for MI retailers to start thinking like this. How about a music store mixed into an outdoor, camping store? Both offer lifestyle products that can easily go hand in hand. Your store display may greet customers at the front entrance with a focal point of a

mannequin seated on a portable camp chair, holding an acoustic guitar dressed in camping clothes with a cooler, small grill and other music and outdoor accessories. Of course, these are all products you sell but the idea is you're selling a lifestyle. Music and outdoors. Recreation and relaxation. The person who likes to camp probably likes music and attends festivals but may have never thought about buying their first guitar. That person is now standing in your store looking at buying a new Yeti cooler and suddenly they see that awesome acoustic and their interest is spiked. Obviously you need to have an interest in outdoors and camping to know your customer and what you're selling, but there's no rule that says you can't mix your wares.

Finally, many consumers order online and pick up in store, which is the perfect opportunity to create integrated virtual experiences where the transaction starts online and finishes in your store. Once the customer is there, you have the opportunity to create deeper relationships by introducing them to something they didn't know you sold or a product they never knew they needed. **MI**

Billy Cuthrell is the founder of Progressive Music Center, an MI consultant and an adjunct professor of music industry studies at Appalachian State University.



# The Intentional Shopper

Imagine a music store where everyone who walks in buys something; where overhead is down and sales are up; where shoplifting is zero; where you can hear the phone ring; and where you get to retire at 30. OK, the last one was a joke, but everything else is possible right now thanks to the rise of what I call the intentional shopper.

Shopping during a global pandemic has caused both a power shift and opportunity. All of a sudden, there's not as much choice for consumers bowing to government-ordered limits on social interaction, factory slowdowns, shipping delays and plain fear of what lies ahead. Right now, these conditions favor local, American-made and boutique suppliers, who can get products into stores quickly. It also favors retailers who have stock on their shelves and the expertise to sell it. Businesses willing to build a relationship with the customer while quickly and personally responding to their needs will get the sale not just today, but tomorrow as well.

Out of the ashes of limited choice, less convenience, and unforeseen delays are huge opportunities for businesses that can offer certainty in uncertain times. Anonymity is out, authenticity is in. Waiting on hold, or chatting with a bot is out, while getting advice from a real person in real time is in. More than ever, the door is wide open for retailers who offer the very things that customers need right now: access, availability, expertise and assurance. They want validation, and they want to know they're

making the right choice. After years of increasing automation coupled with a depersonalization in the marketplace, the long-term relationship is back.

It's a round trip of sorts. Shoppers went from Main Street to the internet, and now they're back. The intentional shopper is willing to visit on your terms, even if it means waiting outside, shopping during abbreviated hours or being carried around the shop inside of an iPad. They've done the research and generally know what they want, and have a budget in mind even before they come to you. They've got other meetings, kids to educate, aging parents to comfort and the prospect of waiting in a line around the block to get groceries. They have a very small window of time and have to be intentional in everything they do. What they ask in return is that you're laser-focused on them.

To take advantage of this disruption, we have to be as intentional in our time management as our customer now is. In our store, we've gone to an appointment-only model during much of the pandemic, which has led to a much more focused shopper, with close to 80% conversion-to-sale rate. An appointment can be whatever you want it to be – an in-store meeting, an online meeting, a curbside pickup, a delivery, messaging through social media, even a phone call. The key is to be deliberate in your sales pitch, and with it you'll discover your closing rates are up, staff hours and overhead are down, and there is less chatter along the way.

You can wrangle customers in by using a scheduling app on your website, where customers can schedule in-person or online appointments. They choose the time within the hours you set. Moreover, in the comments section they'll say what they're interested in. This gives today's shopper the structure they crave but with the human touch we can provide. It also gives the retailer time to prepare, and to have options, ideas, resources and pricing at the get-go. That's a huge advantage over the days when you would simply react to whoever came through your door.

Other benefits to scheduling? Your floor staff is more productive, and theft is way down. Like zero. Shoplifters are not going to schedule an appointment to steal from you, and this means your staff can focus on ringing up sales. With your assistance, your customer will find what they need and check out right away. Did I mention you don't have to talk about their gig or listen to "Stairway to Heaven" to make the sale? Your floor staff can hear the phone ring again, build the product pages, shoot the videos, return the phone calls and do the social media posts that keep your business moving forward.

Consumers are more committed than ever to shopping local, independent and more intentionally. Likewise, indie retailers are well positioned to showcase their expertise, create relationships and be the hero again. Let's hope that part of 2020 is here to stay. **MI**

Brad Boynton is owner of Rhythm Traders in Portland, Oregon.



**Shoppers went from Main Street to the internet, and now they're back.**



# FROM THE TOP

INTERVIEW BY SAM TORNOW

## JOSH SCOTT | JHS PEDALS

### HOW DO YOU START YOUR DAY?

It depends on the day. It's typically research and things for The JHS Show [on YouTube], episode-type material and combing through interviews. We do a lot of traveling and interviewing people. So [I'm] working in that research mode in the mornings. Some of that can be going through transcripts and writing scripts and pulling out stories and or interviewing somebody for the show.

### DO YOU THEN TRANSITION OVER TO BUILDING PEDALS LATER IN THE DAY? HOW DOES THAT BALANCE WORK NOW?

The balance is not quite 50/50, and it's not linear. Meaning some days all I do is [work on the] show. There's actually some weeks where all I'll do is the show. It's kind of all over the place. It's scheduled out, according to our tasks, how far ahead we are traveling someplace. Take today, for instance. I have been working on show stuff since about 7 a.m., and then this interview and JHS pedal stuff in between. I have meetings and things throughout the day, and then I'll work on the show more in the evening. I think this year as a whole has been a lot more show work.

### IT SEEMS LIKE THE SHOW HAS ESPECIALLY TAKEN OFF RECENTLY. HOW DID THE IDEA FOR A FULLY-FLEDGED SHOW COME TO BE?

I have never been a huge fan of demoing my pedals. It makes me feel a little bit like a used car salesman. It's hard to talk about your stuff because you're going to say, "My system sounds great. You should buy it." That's not how I approach things. I want a product to speak for itself. So I had always been immersed and obsessed with history of some sort. And then, basically, we just had the circumstance where I had moved [Nick Loux] from being a builder to being a full-time marketing video producer to work on YouTube, Instagram and stuff.

We wanted to do it like it should be done. A lot of people toss up demos. That's not how YouTube is meant to work. So I was doing a lot of guitar history, guitar teaching and all these experiments, I was doing a lot of public talking and classroom stuff on the history of electronics. And we just started talking about those topics [on the channel]. If you watch the first 15, 20 episodes, we're just hanging out here and have something more casual. We saw that people were enjoying it to our surprise, and we just morphed into a TV show.

### ON THE SHOW, YOU FEATURE AND TALK

### ABOUT OTHER PEDAL COMPANIES, SOMETHING OTHER BRANDS MIGHT SHY AWAY FROM. WHY DO YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR COMPETITION?

The short and cliché answer might be that when the industry does well, we're going to do well. When the tide rises, all ships rise. We're just doing what we want to do. I wholeheartedly believe that if our pedals aren't selling, it is not the fault of a competitor. It's because our pedals aren't good, or we have horrible service.

It's about finding out what do I want to do every day. A big part of that is that I love other people's stories and being a storyteller. A lot of those stories and a lot of that history is right in front of us. The more I've traveled and tried to dig these stories out from the '60 and '50s and '70s, [I meet] people who invented some of these pedals and can't remember what they did. And that's the most frustrating part of what I've been doing for a few years. I want to keep that from happening by telling these stories.

### YOU MENTIONED HAVING SOMEBODY WORKING ON THE SHOW FULL TIME. FOR A BRAND THAT'S LOOKING TO START DOING SOMETHING SIMILAR, WHAT PIECE OF ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER?

Do what you love doing. It is hard. An episode a week for over two years takes a lot of work. [We have] a staff of four people who are separate from the pedal company working on the show. So it's become a whole other thing. So you have to do what excites you. If you do it to jump in on a trend, I don't think it would work because it would be so exhausting.

### CAN YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT THE IDEA OF BUILDING THE ALL-WHITE JHS 3 SERIES BUDGET PEDALS AND WHAT REALLY GOT YOU INSPIRED TO DO IT? MOST BOUTIQUE BUILDERS DON'T LOOK TO BE BUDGET-FRIENDLY.

I know even defining them as a budget [series] is hard for some people. Some people think budget should mean \$30, not \$100, but for me, if we can make an American-made pedal and have our hands on every part of it, at the lowest price possible? It's budget. We were like, for this to work, we have to sell a lot of them. I think we also just wanted to rebel a little bit against an era [of pedal construction] that's becoming more complicated.

And I love all [the complicated, digital] stuff, but for us, it became what can we offer that goes the other way?





## THE DETAILS

JOSH SCOTT, PRESIDENT

**HQ:** Kansas City, Missouri

**Founded:** 2008

**Employees:** 29

**JHS Show YouTube Subscribers:** 254,000+

**Fun Fact:** If he wasn't in the music business, Josh would have used his love of history to become a teacher.



That was the goal. It was what's the market doing? How can we swing the other way and do something that'll last? And we want it to be good enough to span for decades. We'll see how that plays out.

### DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE PEDAL INDUSTRY IS A BUBBLE WAITING TO BURST, AS SOME PEOPLE SPECULATE? WHAT DO YOU THINK THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY WILL LOOK LIKE?

I don't think it's as simple as some people have stated it about pedals. I've seen the people's comments saying that the pedal bubble is going to burst. It's pretty nuanced, but I think it comes down to fewer companies are going to be successful. The market's going to go back to something like in the '80s, when there wasn't a single guitar player concerned with what type of switching was in their pedal as a true bypass. And companies were selling millions of pedals. I think we're headed back there. I think that the companies [that] are hung up on those unrealistic expectations of what a pedal should be are going to have a hard time. It's coming full circle in a weird way.

### HOW DID YOU GET INTO MAKING PEDALS?

This story starts back in 2007. I was doing studio and live touring work at the time, and I had a broken Boss BD-2 Blues Driver pedal. It had a broken foot switch, nothing crazy. All I had to do was replace the contact switch inside, and I fixed it. But in opening up the pedal, seeing all the wires and components inside of it, I got super-interested. Specifically, I wanted to know why my two versions of the same Blues Driver circuit — my Keeley modded Boss BD-2 and the original Boss BD-2 pedal — sounded so different. I liked them both a lot. I loved the unmodified Boss BD-2, but I loved Robert Keeley's modded version as well. I would stack them with each other, and I took both units apart, examining them piece by piece, seeing how they compared.

It was a major learning curve for me; I'd be looking at a capacitor, which I didn't know was a capacitor at the time, and I say, "Oh, there's a number on it. What is this thing?" I'd use a search engine and figure it out, "Oh, this is a capacitor. These numbers mean something." And I took out a notepad and I cross-referenced both circuits for fun.

### DID YOU HAVE ANY TECHNICAL EDUCATION OR BACKGROUND WHEN YOU STARTED OUT MAKING PEDALS?

I have a high school diploma with Ds and Cs, mostly. I

was not a great student. Of course, I understand now why it was always really frustrating. I don't learn that way. So, no, I have no technical education. I got into pedal building because I loved it. It's the same way with a lot of people who start their own business. They get into a certain field because it's fun and they're interested, and although at the start they might not know technically what they're doing, they're motivated to learn. If they love it, if they invest time in it and work hard, they can figure it out. That's what I did, and I'm still learning. As the years have gone by, people like Robert Keeley and Brian Wampler have taught me a lot. In fact, we teach each other. Some-

times I'll discover something and share it with them. It's a constant education. One of my favorite quotes is from Albert Einstein: "I believe that love is a better teacher than a sense of duty, at least for me." I think it explains how I think about this. My education — about 13 years of experience so far — is pretty evenly split between amazing successes and horrible mistakes.

### HOW DID YOU APPROACH MUSIC STORES WITH YOUR PEDALS AT FIRST? AT WHAT POINT DID YOU FEEL CONFIDENT?

The company started out as JHS Mods, with no real intention of building our own pedals, but around 2008 I actually started labeling these prototypes with JHS Pedals stickers. When I made that choice, it's just like a switch flipped in my head. I did not care if people didn't like them, I was just going to try to sell them. I went to guitar shops with a little crappy pedal board of stamped pedals that didn't make a lot of sense. My initial pedals were a mess, with these knobs labeled with letters instead of words. Asking a store to carry that at the time was almost suicidal.

I just went and did it anyway, which is hopefully a huge encouragement for a lot of you out there. If you build a pedal, if you take it to a guitar shop and ask them to buy it, the worst thing that'll happen is it won't work out. Who cares? At least you tried. Nine times out of ten, if you keep on trying, something will work out.

### IF YOU COULD GO BACK IN TIME TO WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED JHS, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

I would only do one thing differently: I would get ventilation fans for my soldering iron immediately after purchasing it, so that the incident around 2009 when I was soldering and blood started coming on my nose and I had to go to the emergency room would disappear from the timeline. Also, I'd keep better financial records and pay taxes faster.

"ONE OF MY FAVORITE QUOTES IS FROM ALBERT EINSTEIN: 'I BELIEVE THAT LOVE IS A BETTER TEACHER THAN A SENSE OF DUTY, AT LEAST FOR ME.'"





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# Pianos Float Up

Acoustic piano sales, which some feared would be challenged in the pandemic, actually rose. The real problem has been getting them over here and into people's homes safely.

—By Daniel Margolis

Over a year into the pandemic, vaccine or not, many people are still quarantining, and the MI sales boom this inspired is still in place. Most of the attention around this boom focused on instruments and gear easy to get into people's homes and play or use quietly — guitars, keyboards, podcasting equipment ... But a much more cumbersome to ship and install, and thus seemingly unlikely to sell, instrument is performing very well in this situation: acoustic pianos.

It's a trend people started noticing widely three months into COVID-19's shut down of the U.S. A June 29, 2020, New York Times article looking into the trend was headlined simply, "Concerts Disappeared. Piano Sales Survived." Some piano dealers have done more than that — they've thrived.

Dan Shykind, who co-owns Downtown Piano Works, a piano dealer in Frederick, Maryland, with his wife Theresa Shykind, is one such dealer. "We had a record year in 2020," Shykind said. "We had a bit of a slowdown in February and then all hell broke loose. What happens in our business is that you have strong retail sales throughout the year and then June and July come along and retail drops off a bit. This year, all bets were off. Retail stayed completely robust and institutional sales were robust."

How robust? Considerably. Shykind reported more than 15% growth year over year for 2020, with Downtown Piano Works selling roughly a piano a day, totaling out between 300 to 400 for the year. What's more impressive is how far ahead the Shykind family already were in speaking with Music Inc. in early March.

"Last year was a record year," Shykind said. "As of yesterday, we are equal, just in units, to where we

were at the end of May in 2020."

So it looks like Downtown Piano Works is set to top itself. How do they do it? Well, one large factor is that the Shykind family aren't intimidated by economic downturns, having originally opened in the middle of one in August 2008. "It was surprising to a lot of people that we were opening a piano shop in the worst economy, but it was a great time to open a business," he said. "You could negotiate everything at the time, from leases to terms, things like that. And it forced us to run very thin."

Theresa Shykind elaborated on this formative experience. "It seemed like the smartest time to invest," she said. "If you are creative and work hard, sometimes those opportunities when things slow down [are] when you can get the most accomplished."

Located roughly 50 miles north of Washington, D.C., and roughly 60 miles west of Baltimore, Downtown Piano Works boasts a 3,200-square-foot showroom and a 1,200-square-foot warehouse. The staff is pretty much just Dan and Theresa, augmented by a part-time salesperson and six teachers. The store is all Yamaha, which Dan asserted gives them a distinct advantage. "It's no different than the Apple store, because people will come to see a huge breadth and depth of the line," he said.

Downtown Piano Works has also been directly involved with the music community, having given 160 concerts since opening. "We [would] get 75 people in at least once a month, pre-pandemic, to hear some of the most famous pianists in the world, and it's free," he said. "The people that we get are people that you'd see at Lincoln Center or Carnegie Hall or the Kennedy Center. So it's very different to hear somebody



that normally would be a speck 50 feet away from you or more, up close, really no more than, say, 20 feet away.” These pianists include names such as Leon Fleisher, Jonathan Biss, Shai Wosner, Alexander Kobrin and Alon Goldstein. Over a dozen of these performances were broadcast by PBS station WETA’s show “Front Row Washington.”

“Bringing really high-quality music free to the community is important,” Theresa said. “Those concerts really have given the opportunity for people to experience classical music in a way that it’s not normally experienced, especially with the level of performers that are playing. We’ve even had a performance where every audience member had purchased a piano from us, including the artist who was playing.”

## The Amazon Effect

Asked what tip he would give other acoustic piano retailers to ensure sales, Dan quickly pointed to one thing — responsiveness. “People are extraordinarily impatient these days,” he said. “Amazon proved a couple of things. One, that you can give incredible customer service at a great price, and two, that you can be responsive 24/7. If you have voicemail in your business, you’re losing customers. Much to my wife’s chagrin, I’ll answer the phone at 11 p.m.”

Another factor, inspired in part by the pandemic, that Dan pointed to that drives sales is meeting your customers when they want to meet you. Dan

says Downtown Piano Works will never open its doors for standard retail hours again. The store is now open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., by appointment only. “We found retail hours, which have been around for a century or more, they’re made for stay-at-home parents and retirees,” he said. “They really don’t cater to our customer. They force our customer to adopt their lives to meet our hours. We’d have six or seven families every Saturday and Sunday buying pianos and it was invariably over a three-hour period and they were all in there together, and it really is hard to sell pianos that way.”

Thomas Solich, owner of Solich Piano in Columbus and Cleveland, Ohio, also an all-Yamaha dealer, agrees that the key to selling pianos during the pandemic has been meeting the customer however they want to access you. When quarantine began, he was worried. “For acoustic pianos, you might think that’s going to be challenging, right? Because there is definitely a touch-feel here, immersed in the acoustic piano,” he said.

In response, Solich Piano went virtual, and forget getting on Zoom, it went on everything. “We had our salespeople put every conferencing system on their iPhones,” Solich said. “So FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, Teams, WebEx...”

This worked. “We sold 43 percent more acoustic pianos from March through June 2020 than we did March through June 2019,” Solich said. “We didn’t expect it at all. We thought we were going to sell 43 percent less.”

Cooper Piano in Atlanta is another piano dealer that weathered the coronavirus well — in fact the store placed in Music Inc.’s 2020 Retail Excellence Awards. Speaking to Music Inc. on March 11, the one-year anniversary of the World Health Organization declaring COVID-19 a global pandemic, Laura Cooper shared that over the past year the store sold 548 units, a 20% increase YOY.

“At first I was definitely surprised because we were all really nervous [about] how something like this would affect the piano industry, just because people kind of look at this as a luxury item,” Cooper said. “There was definitely some nerves [about how] people might want to be saving their money, because they don’t know how long this is going to last. So the last thing they want to spend it on is something that’s not a necessity.”

What Cooper realized is that the acoustic piano customer may be, to some degree, insulated from a recession. “The people who have acoustic piano money aren’t as affected throughout this pandemic,” she said. “The people who have jobs that pay them well enough, they’re just working from home now. So, their financial position or their ability to afford an acoustic piano hasn’t changed.”

Grant Wolach, sales manager at The Piano Place in Troy, Michigan, is another piano dealer who was nervous at the start of pandemic. “I thought, ‘This is going to be devastating,’” he said. “Things were slow enough and sliding downward for such a long time





From Left Ben Steiner, Thomas Solich, Theresa Shykind

that [I thought] it would just continue that way. Certainly when people started rising out of the woodwork, I was surprised that it was going that way.”

Like many retailers last year, Wolach had to quickly switch up tactics. “At first it was devastating at the beginning of the year when we had to close down and then we had to really turn to alternative methods,” he said. “Being old and archaic, at first I wasn’t into the Facebook and all of the online facilities and marketing and I had to become acquainted with that.”

The Piano Place persisted. Wolach estimates he continued to sell 12 to 15 pianos a month.

## Not Enough Containers

Selling acoustic pianos in the pandemic does present certain challenges, some of which directly relate to their size. A guitar purchased online can be delivered contact-free. But you can’t just drop an acoustic piano on someone’s front porch.

Downtown Piano Works teams with a company called Apollo Piano Moving. Its movers take all necessary precautions when entering someone’s home — masks, gloves, etc. — and some of its movers are already vaccinated. But further, the movers are strategic in where they place a piano in a home to minimize contact.

“They will try every way they can to limit the number of stairs,” Dan Shykind said. “They don’t care about outside stairs, but if you see somebody with 15 or 20 inside stairs, we’re going to do everything we can to explain to them that

it’s very hard to move a piano up stairs, inside, masked, and you don’t want three guys huffing and puffing in your home. People have been very accommodating putting pianos into places in their homes that don’t require that.”

As in other sectors of MI, acoustic piano does face stocking challenges. Where acoustic piano is stressed the most is on container ships. “The Port of Long Beach that normally you can have turned around within a few days, you have now ships waiting weeks and weeks to get in,” Shykind said.

Acoustic piano suppliers and manufacturers report problems here as well. “One of the things was a big, huge holdup in Long Beach, California,” said Joe DeFio of Hailun, who reports a 50 percent increase in sales of the company’s acoustic pianos. “They had 5,000 containers stacked up in a lot, and I can’t tell you how many ships anchored. So, getting the stuff to us was slow, because nobody anticipated the amount of business that was going to be done during this period. They actually ran out of containers and so we were waiting for shipments that couldn’t come because there [were] no containers to put the pianos in.”

Chad Schumacher, marketing director with Kawai America, reports that the company’s acoustic piano sales increased by 15 to 20 percent last year and that it faced supply chain challenges in meeting this increased demand — and confirms the problem at ports.

“Kawai was definitely able to provide

more of those acoustic pianos, but really the holdup is just right at the port and getting them,” Schumacher said. “It’s just taken longer to get more of our products because of the amount of traffic right now that is at the ports.”

Gary Klugman, director of the keyboard department at Yamaha Corp. of America, says his company is in the same boat. “We’ve seen shipping delays,” he said. “Not enough cargo ships on enough containers, not enough trucks.”

According to Ben Steiner, COO of Steinway Musical Instruments, it’s hard for the company to get anything from Asia right now. “We’re having to pay huge prices for everything that we bring over from Asia,” Steiner said. “Somehow all the shipping containers ended up in the United States, and they never got back to China. So they’re very expensive to secure over there.”

That’s for ocean freight. Not surprisingly, air freight is even worse. “We sometimes have to air freight pianos,” he said. “Air freight charges are 10 times normal right now. It’s insane how expensive it is to send a piano by air freight.”

When she’s ready to take a break from selling pianos, Theresa Shykind is going with something as far afield from them as you can get. She’s ordered a Moog Claravox Centennial theramin from Sweetwater. She said, “I thought it’s the perfect quarantine, COVID instrument because you can’t actually have anything within six feet of the instrument, otherwise it interferes with the signal.” **MI**

# GEAR >

## PIANOS, KEYBOARDS & SYNTHESIZERS



### ← IK MULTIMEDIA UNO SYNTH PRO

IK Multimedia's Uno Synth Pro can help users create nearly any analog synth sound they can imagine. The Uno Synth Pro features a unique dual-filter, three-oscillator paraphonic design, 256 presets, 64-step sequencer, studio-grade effects, expanded connections and more. The unit is available in two form factors to suit all players' needs.

{[ikmultimedia.com](http://ikmultimedia.com)}

### M-AUDIO → HAMMER 88 PRO

M-Audio has introduced a new full-size, weighted keyboard controller, the Hammer 88 Pro. This controller is created for musicians looking for real piano feel, onboard software controls and precision playing options for fast and fun music creation right out of the box. The Hammer 88 Pro gives players all the options they need to control whatever music creation software they choose.

{[m-audio.com](http://m-audio.com)}



### ← ROLAND JD-800 MODEL EXPANSION

Roland has announced the JD-800 Model Expansion, the latest addition to the Zen-Core Model Expansion lineup available through Roland Cloud. Based on Roland's JD-800 hardware synthesizer released in 1991, the JD-800 Model Expansion celebrates its 30th anniversary by bringing it to modern players through the Zenology Software Synthesizer and select Roland hardware instruments with the Zen-Core Synthesis System. Combining the original JD-800 waveforms with advanced modeling techniques, the JD-800 Model Expansion captures the sonic behavior of its vintage counterpart with 100% authenticity, coupled with deep sound-shaping potential through a full recreation of the JD-800's vast control architecture.

{[roland.com](http://roland.com)}



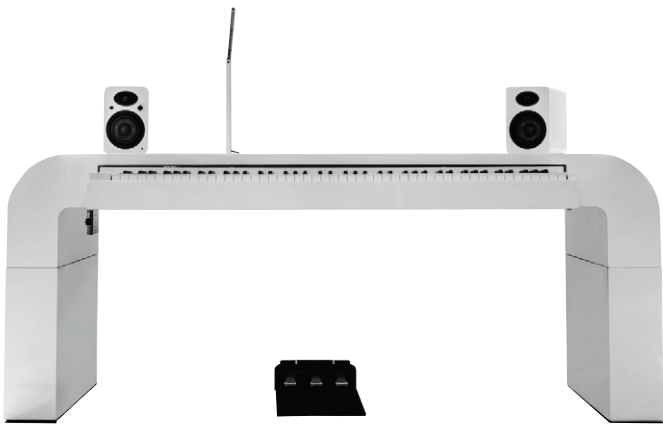
### YAMAHA → DGX-670 DIGITAL PIANO

Yamaha has unveiled the new DGX-670, replacing the company's DGX-660. The digital piano is a full, 88-note weighted action keyboard with superior playability, superb sound and visual appeal — making it ideal for beginners and accomplished pianists alike. The DGX-670 also includes the company's Graded Hammer Standard keyboard action, which delivers the touch piano teachers recommend for building proper finger technique for playing acoustic pianos. While the DGX-660 had a traditional, rectangular frame, the DGX-670 has been totally redesigned with a modern body featuring curved edges. Operation of a wide selection of functions is easy thanks to a full-color LCD screen.

{[usa.yamaha.com](http://usa.yamaha.com)}







↑ **QRS**  
**PNOdesk**

QRS Music Technologies has launched the PNOdesk, a contemporary desk incorporating a fully weighted digital keyboard featuring QRS's patent-pending QRS-Connector technology. The PNOdesk features the convenience, appeal and functionality of a desk, with the added space-saving benefit of a built-in keyboard. The PNOdesk makes learning to play, practicing in silence, online remote lessons and composing as easy as ever. [qrsmusic.com](http://qrsmusic.com)



↑ **ROLI**  
**LUMI KEYS STUDIO EDITION**

Roli's Lumi Keys Studio Edition is a MPE-enabled controller that offers polyphonic pitch-bend and aftertouch per key, as well as new ways to compose with light on illuminated keys. The Lumi Keys Studio Edition lets musicians bend pitch through vibrato-like movements on a keyboard controller with traditional key action, adding expression in a natural and intuitive way. [roli.com](http://roli.com)



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# The Comeback Kid

The live audio market shares how it's with coped with the pandemic shutdowns and what a possible restart looks like. —**Katie Kailus**

It's hard to believe, but it has now been a full 12 months since most Americans have attended a live concert. Or a Broadway production. Or a stand-up comedy show. Or a live DJ set. For many portions of the music and pro-audio industries, the pandemic provided an albeit small but noticeable silver lining — an increase in music makers picking up guitar and ukulele, in influx in home recording equipment sales as musicians recorded at home, even an uptick in hobbyist trying their hand at DJing. But the live audio sector has been the hardest hit, with live entertainment falling at the final stage of most states' re-opening plans.

However, as vaccines continue to roll

out and, with proper safety precautions in place, many in the industry are eyeing a tentative return to live events by the end of this summer.

"I think we'll see a return to in-person events and concerts sometime this summer, starting with smaller events, socially distanced first, but eventually I think we are going to see it snowball," said Cypher Shah of audio retailer Astro AVL located in Glendale, California. "I know, on a personal level, I'm going to go to twice as many concerts and events in the next year when it's safe to do so, because I know how much I've missed that aspect of life. I think we will see a similar reaction with most people."

Sweetwater's Thad Tegtmeier agrees with Shah's anticipated start date.

"We are certainly hoping musicians can get back on live stages across the country sometime in the latter half of this year," said Tegtmeier, who serves as vice president of campus sales operations. "It's starting to happen now on a limited basis in some markets, but I suspect we'll see much more happening starting in June and July."

As the sales manager and lead installation foreman at Astro AVL, Shah said he has been busy with clubs, bars and entertainment spaces readying to reopen in the Los Angeles area.

"The demand is still there, and the





1. Eventide's Ray Maxwell 2. Sweetwater's Thad Tegtmeier 3. Yorkville's James Greenspan 4. Allen & Heath's Jeff Hawley 5. Astro AVL's Cypher Shah.

public is ready to party when it's safe," he said. "I'm on the front lines, and we have multiple installations going on right now. For the last four weeks, we've been getting calls every day."

### Coping with the Shutdown

For manufacturers and retailers of live audio products, stagnant live sales over the last year required them to adapt quickly. Mackie sponsored socially distanced shows and events where they could occur. Eventide concentrated on its new stompbox offerings. And Yorkville Sound put a focus on continuing to collaborate with the end user.

"While the large-scale P.A. market slowed down, our portable battery-powered EXM Mobile series had a positive impact for musicians gigging from their driveways, backyards and rooftops," said James Greenspan, Yorkville's marketing and communications manager. "We put

our EXM Mobile line on the forefront to help facilitate [these] socially distanced outdoor gigs, as well as hosted informative how-to and product webinars to encourage people to continue creating and presented more products from our distributed brands to push home recording projects."

For console manufacturer Allen & Heath, changes in the live broadcasting market due to the pandemic yielded positive results.

"New subsets of the broadcast world popped up," said Jeff Hawley, marketing director of Allen & Heath USA. "For instance, the need to create and mix in simulated crowd noise in live broadcasts. This also proved to be a good match for mid-sized live sound consoles operated by FOH and monitor engineers. Forward-thinking companies like Sonofans snatched up a pile of our Avantis consoles and hired some of the best live engi-

neers in the business to supply this type of in-studio, immersive, simulated crowd audio for Fox Sports. There are many examples out there of this type of turning lemons into lemonade and successfully navigating through these tectonic shifts in consumer needs."

While Astro AVL's brick-and-mortar location in Glendale, California, was closed during the lockdowns, the phone lines were open — fielding an influx in tech support calls from new customers.

"People needed assistance when learning how to operate these new products and technologies they were purchasing due to the pandemic," Shah explained. "Since everyone was socially distanced, there was no peer learning."

Astro AVL also saw a strong increase in the sales of ring lights and green screens as performers began livestreaming their gigs. But now as installations are ramping up, Shah said incorporating

hold-overs from the livestream boom — such as green screens — is important.

“We are chewing a different kind of meat here and have been for a long time,” he explained. “Everyone has ‘gone green’ with DJs using green screens to create cool visuals behind them during the lockdown livestreams. I don’t think that effect is going to end there. That’s going to have to translate into the live scene. Those who use these effects will be the pioneers in 2022. Those that have taken the tools from the livestream era and moved them into our new world will, I believe, be the ones that succeed.”

On a similar note, Shah added that dealers who offer audio installations can help their clients stand out during these first few months by tuning into the changes in the marketplace.

“We’ve seen a lot of things that used to be held indoors move outdoors — such as gyms,” he explained. “The smart ones are taking the indoor experience and moving it outdoors with a similar presentation. For example, we’ve seen an uptick in battery-operated speakers and

mics that can be used outdoors.”

With the stoppage of live events, many nightclubs, theaters and venues were forced to close permanently and many production companies shut down — leading to a slew of used audio gear on the market. When asked if this influx will affect the sales of new gear, Shah said it was doubtful.

“While there is a lot of used gear circulating out there, it is either very high-end, very specialized or very old,” he explained. “During the time last year when venues and production companies were liquidating it, there wasn’t anyone around to buy it. New venues opening up are not looking for used gear because that’s a risky investment. They’re looking for a turnkey solution because they only have one shot at opening in this competitive climate, so it’s not affecting our sales.”

### Restarting Smart

Mackie’s Vice President of Sales and Marketing Ralph Quintero said he believes the next few months will con-

tinue on a case-by-case basis for the live event market.

“I believe we will observe small venue shows in the coming summer months where people can warm up to public interactions,” Quintero said. “Larger events are beginning to book for dates in September and onward.”

Eventide’s Ray Maxwell said he believes we are staring down “something of a renaissance period for live sound companies.”

“I think there is a real pent up demand for the concert experience and, once it’s OK to do it safely, it’s going to explode,” he said. “People want to go out and see live shows and do all the things we used to do in the ‘before times,’ so I think there will be something of a renaissance in the near future.”

But Astro AVL’s Shah said these first few months will be crucial to determining who makes it and who doesn’t.

“Live event companies and venues are going to be testing the waters in the next few months,” Shah said. “Those that do it right will be an inspirational story.” **MI**

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### TASCAM →

#### TM-70 DYNAMIC MIC

TASCAM's TM-70 Dynamic Microphone is designed as a unique hybrid of super-cardioid and dynamic elements. The TM-70 is resistant to ambient noise and is ideally voiced to handle the nuance of the human voice — making this microphone a great choice for live broadcasting, podcasting, film and audio streaming. Featuring a super cardioid polar pattern and a frequency response of 30Hz, 20kHz, the TM-70 was specifically engineered to capture what it's pointed at, effectively isolating sound sources such as directional dialog.

{[tascam.com](http://tascam.com)}



### AMERICAN RECORDER →

#### ALLCAST VIDEO CONFERENCING SYSTEM

American Recorder has announced it is now distributing AllCast's Video Conferencing System. The system features a microphone, light and HD webcam, which deliver superior audio and video performance while providing maximum convenience and control via AllCast's exclusive Multi-Function Monitor Stand. The system features a fully integrated microphone extension arm and accommodates up to two 27-inch flat-screen monitors. In addition, specialized mounting brackets support the included ring light and webcam, and it features a convenient three-way mounting system that makes it a snap to mount on any desk, table or workstation.

{[americanrecorder.com](http://americanrecorder.com)}



### ← MICLOCK MICLOCK

The MicLock is a patented mic clip lock solution for musicians using Sennheiser's MD 421 microphone. With a single piece clip-on design, the MicLock secures the MD 421 and offers worry-free recording and performing when using this mic. The MicLock perfectly snaps and locks the clip arm into place, weighs only 1 ounce and features a high-strength epoxy body with no moving parts.

{[themiclock.com](http://themiclock.com)}



### WARM AUDIO ↑

#### PRO & PREMIER CABLE LINES

Warm Audio has announced a new line of cables that exclusively feature cable stock from Swiss manufacturer Gotham AG. The offerings are split into the Pro and Premier ranges, with the Premier range offering best-in-class features like Star-quad assembly, Double-Reussen shielding, gold connectors and a braided outer wrap. The Pro range, pictured, features silver connectors, Gotham's three-conductor cable and a flexible PVC jacket. With robust construction and custom-designed connectors, both the Premier and Pro ranges boast a limited lifetime warranty.

{[warmaudio.com](http://warmaudio.com)}





**AUDIO-TECHNICA →**  
**ES945, ES947 BOUNDARY MICROPHONES**

Audio-Technica has added several new variations of its ES945 Omnidirectional Condenser Boundary Microphone and ES947 Cardioid Condenser Boundary Microphone. All models are intended for surface flush-mount installation and include Audio-Technica's UniGuard RFI-shielding innovations for immunity from radio frequency interference. {[audio-technica.com](http://audio-technica.com)}



**ICON PRO AUDIO ↑**  
**COCOON, MARTIAN MICS**

iCON Pro Audio has debuted its Cocoon and Martian microphones. The Cocoon mic boasts an eye-catching design and incorporates a true electrostatic Golden Drop transducer within its space-age-looking capsule architecture. A sputtering technique, where a precisely engineered pattern of golden dots is distributed, this technology lets Cocoon's 33 millimeter, active diameter diaphragm move with laser-sharp precision for increased intelligibility while reducing any coloration or distortion. Martian (pictured) features an inclosed shock-mounted capsule with an electrostatic Golden Drop transducer made of pure 999 gold, allowing the 26 millimeter diameter diaphragm to move more quickly for rich detail and transparency. {[iconproaudio.com](http://iconproaudio.com)}



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#### ← LUNA GUITARS VINEYARD SERIES

Luna Guitars has released its Vineyard series ukuleles. Available in concert and tenor sizes, the Vineyard series represents a new level of high-end Luna ukuleles, complete with unique craftsmanship, including a bevel, slotted headstock and solid koa top with intricate designs. The Vineyard ukes feature Fishman's Kala Ukulele Onboard Preamp System with onboard tuner. The Uke Vineyard Koa Bevel Tenor has a 17-inch scale length and traditional tenor cutaway body, while the Uke Vineyard Koa Bevel Concert offers a 15-inch scale length and traditional concert cutaway body.

{[lunaguitars.com](http://lunaguitars.com)}

#### GODIN GUITARS → FAIRMOUNT CH COMPOSER QIT

Godin Guitars has debuted its Fairmount CH Composer QIT acoustic guitar as part of its Godin Acoustic Series. The Fairmount CH Composer has a comfortable Concert Hall body shape, with a shallow depth and sleek silhouette, making it ideal for songwriting and performing. The body is an all-mahogany construction with a smooth semi-gloss finish. The top and back are solid mahogany with layered mahogany sides. The guitar also has a mahogany neck, offering rich and rounded tones, and features a Richlite fretboard, an ebony bridge and a 25.5-inch long scale for added brightness and harmonic richness in the overall tone.

{[godinguitars.com](http://godinguitars.com)}



#### ← DUNLOP VOLUME (X)8 PEDAL

Designed in collaboration with Pedaltrain, Dunlop has released the Volume (X)8 Pedal, which allows for the most efficient layouts on Metro series and other popular pedalboards. Its 8-inch housing and front-mounted jacks line up perfectly with the routing spaces of the aforementioned pedalboards, so that players can keep everything tidy while fitting all their favorite pedals in place. Like all pedals in the Volume (X) series, the Volume (X)8 Pedal lets players create smooth volume swells.

{[jimdunlop.com](http://jimdunlop.com)}

#### LEVY'S LEATHERS → HEMP STRAPS

Levy's Leathers has expanded its vegan line with the addition of four hemp straps. The additional straps feature designs, including colored rose motifs and patterned taupe. The organic strap line is cruelty-free and made of sustainable materials. The hemp strap's natural webbing and durable two-ply cork ends safely supports one's instrument and the pin-hole stitching on both ends prevent stretching.

{[levysleathers.com](http://levysleathers.com)}







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# GEAR

## DRUMS & PERCUSSION

### GROOVETECH → DK MULTI

GrooveTech Tools' DK Multi is a four-in-one drum key multi-tool. The DK Multi elevates both form and function of the drum key. The centerpiece is a drum key socket optimized for proper fit on the tension rod nut for minimal free play.

Separating the DK Multi from other drum keys is the addition of three hex wrenches — 2 millimeter, 2.5 millimeter and 3 millimeter — for adjustment of pedals and other hardware. The tool skeleton is covered by a polypropylene jacket that feels good in the hand and adds a colorful accent.

{[groovetechtools.com](http://groovetechtools.com)}



### ← DIXON DRUMS PRECISION COIL BASS DRUM PEDAL

Dixon's Precision Coil pedals are a high-powered alternative to traditional rocking spring pedals featuring the direct transfer of energy from its open-coil helical spring to the footboard for increased precision and control. Precision Coil's open-coil helical spring, enclosed in a cast aluminum chamber, connects directly to Precision Coil's beater hub for an efficient transfer of energy from a player's foot to the bass drum, topped off with an adjustable aluminum beater that features a self-adjusting head and adjustable weight for increased leverage and power.

{[playdixon.com](http://playdixon.com)}



### ZILDJIAN → K SWEET SERIES CYMBALS

Zildjian's K Sweet series cymbals are now available in a new cymbal pack, offering 15-inch hi-hats, 17- and 19-inch crashes, and a 21-inch ride. Pushing the Zildjian K sound in a new, sweet and responsive direction, these cymbals are great for all types of music. This full set up includes some of the brand's favorite K Sweet models, including oversized 15-inch hi-hats, with a thin top and an extra heavy bottom offering a great wash without sacrificing a satisfying and solid "chick." The 17- and 19-inch crashes are extra thin in weight for a fast response with unlathed bells that create nicely balanced high frequencies. The medium-thin weight 21-inch ride is thin enough to be crashable but with great stick definition and a clear bell tone.

{[zildjian.com](http://zildjian.com)}





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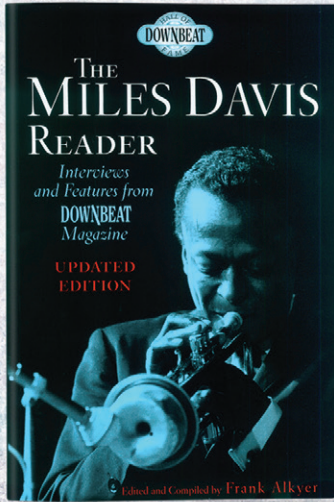
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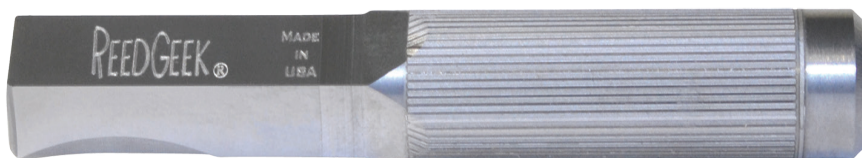
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## GEAR >

### BAND & ORCHESTRA



#### REEDGEK ↑ BULLET

The ReedGeek Bullet is an effective tool for the adjustment of synthetic polymer reeds, both single and double. Utilizing advanced aerospace alloys, the ReedGeek Bullet allows double reed players to adjust tip contours to achieve maximum vibration without damage to the reed or its tip. Featuring a built-in shank file for burnishing and smoothing a reed, virtually every surface of the Bullet can be used with great efficiency. All ReedGeek products are 100% American-made. ([reedgeek.com](http://reedgeek.com))



#### ST. LOUIS MUSIC → PMST-600XJ TENOR SAXOPHONE

P. Mauriat has released the PMST-600XJ tenor saxophone. Featuring yellow brass construction throughout, the 600XJ is a raw brass instrument that allows for maximum vibration. The tenor saxophone also features straight tone holes which offer just the right amount of resistance. P. Mauriat finished the 600XJ with selected parts in silver-plate in order to set it apart.

([stlouismusic.com](http://stlouismusic.com))



## NOVATION → CIRCUIT TRACKS

The latest in Novation's Circuit family of grooveboxes is Circuit Tracks, a standalone groovebox aimed at the modern producer. With two refined polyphonic digital synth tracks, four drum tracks, creative FX and on-the-go capabilities, it's an ideal hands-on device for agile music makers. Circuit Tracks features velocity-sensitive pads and tactile control with customizable patches. Features such as microtiming, probability and pattern mutate let creators define their signature sound and stay inspired. Like all Circuit products, Circuit Tracks features a screen-less workflow.

[novationmusic.com](http://novationmusic.com)



## ON-STAGE ↑ MIX-400v2 MOBILE EQUIPMENT STAND

On-Stage's MIX-400v2 Mobile Equipment Stand provides sturdy, easy-to-transport access to mixing and performance gear. The stand features a headphone-hanging rack that securely stores four sets of headphones — perfect for on-the-go DJs — while support arms flip to provide either front bumpers or brackets for mounting 1U rack gear. The stand moves easily on its wide, heavy-duty, rolling base and locking casters hold it safely in place. Height adjusts to a comfortable level for controlling devices while sitting or standing. The MIX-400v2 disassembles into three pieces for ease of storage and transportation.

[on-stage.com](http://on-stage.com)

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**Drum City Guitarland**  
Wheat Ridge, Colorado

In the past, we haven't really done much for it cause it doesn't happen in our town or anything. The companies don't really get behind it. So that makes it hard on me, but if they did something in our town, like a big drum event or something, I'd be all over it. I just need a company to get behind me and give me some promo, and then we can put it all together. Just doing the simplest thing, for example if Zildjian gave away a pair of sticks or maybe a T-shirt with any Zildjian purchase all month. Simple things would turn it into International Drum Month for any drum shop.



>>>  
**D. Mat Donaldson**  
**Drum World Tulsa**  
Tulsa, Oklahoma

We are going to be printing up T-shirts that say "essential drummer," and then we quote Dr. Fauci. It says "safer at home" at the bottom, and then we add "with drums." It marks it in time and says, "Remember that year we were all shut down? Well, I got a T-shirt that marks that." I'm not sure it's smart because I think by May, maybe a lot of this stuff will be opened back up, so we may have missed the advertising moment, but we're hoping. That's hard to say, that we're hoping COVID's still around, but we're hoping the T-shirt's not irrelevant by the time we get it printed.



>>>  
**Ray Fransen**  
**Ray Fransen's Drum Center**  
Kenner, Louisiana

## How will you **celebrate** **International Drum Month** in May, despite the pandemic?

It's kind of tentative, and we have a number of ideas that we want to try to see if we can develop here, but, by the same token, it's all contingent upon what the powers that be do. For instance, here locally, in the city of New Orleans, it's a complete parish, which is equivalent to a county and it represents probably the greatest portion of music-making around here. And they're still one phase behind the rest of the state as far as being open is concerned. So what we can promote is limited, and not only is it limited in terms of what we can promote, nobody's playing. They just opened up this past week for indoor performances, but the restrictions are so stringent that hardly anyone [can] meet them. There's not a venue around probably that can meet the requirements that they're making. So, what do

we do now? We can't promote anything that's going to be attractive to real players because they don't have any money. Nobody's spending anything. The only ideas that we had so far, something that we've done in the past, is snare-up-grade Saturday, where we'll give them maximum trade in value on snare drums but we also do free checking on the snare. We'll go ahead and check them for you, and get everything right. There's no labor charge and all the parts are going to be half-off.

There's always going to be some kind of sale, but right now, the difficulty in having a sale is availability of merchandise. Almost everybody's out of everything. I'd be afraid to promote something and then not be able to get the merchandise. There's a lot of stuff that's getting hung up in the ports on the West Coast,

and there's even an international shortage of containers right now. I've only got one company that I can depend on for being consistent with deliveries. Everybody else just keeps on getting pushed back further and further and further. We've had drum sets on order from one company since October, and they pushed them back to May now.

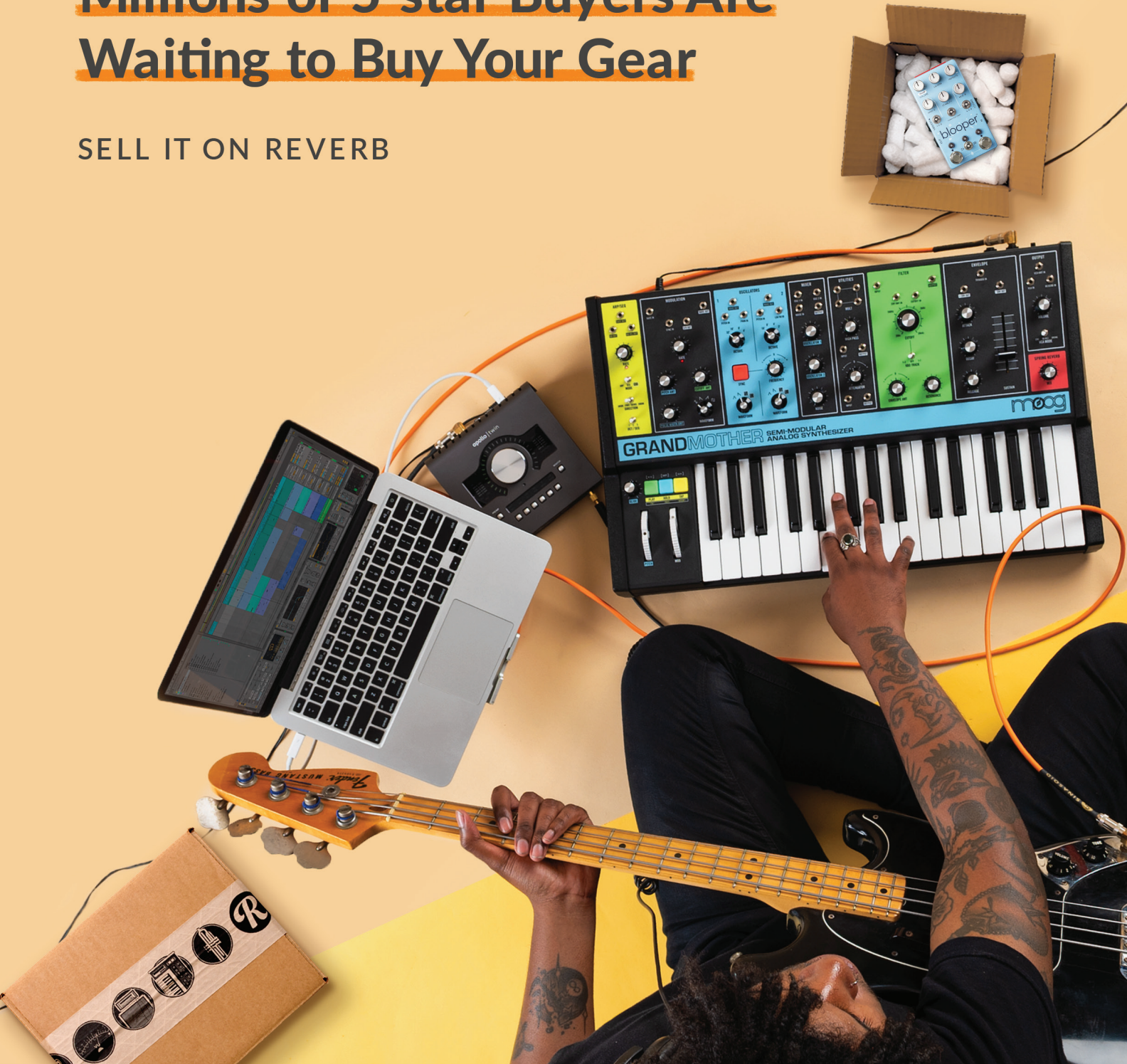
We know we're going to do something, but we just can't tell at this point, and it's going to probably be a last-minute trigger we're going to have to pull depending on what's available at that point in time. It's absolutely insane. We have so many empty spots on the floor right now, and there's nothing we can do about it. It's not like I can call up one of my buddies and get a [transfer] or something like that because they're in the same boat. **MI**





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