

FOR PROGRESSIVE MUSIC RETAILERS

music inc[®]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Frank Alkyer
Publisher, Music Inc./UpBeat Daily
630-941-2030, x108

Ken Wilson
Director of Professional
Development
NAMM
760-438-8007, x215
kenw@namm.com

‘Best In Show’ Panel Caps NAMM University Breakfast Sessions at NAMM Show 2008

39 products and services from NAMM Show exhibitors receive ‘Best In Show’ honors

On the final day of the 2008 NAMM Show, more than 500 attendees received a glimpse at some of the best products and services introduced during the convention.

The popular “Best In Show” panel capped NAMM University’s free breakfast sessions offered during the NAMM Show, held Jan. 17–20, in Anaheim, Calif.

Six industry experts shopped the show on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, picked their favorite companies, products and services, and presented their favorites in five categories during the Sunday-morning panel.

In the session’s final round, each panelist was asked to select their pick (or picks) for the best product or service they saw at this year’s NAMM Show.

Those five “Best In Show” products or services selected by the panelists are:

- Digidesign’s Eleven guitar amp emulation plug-in for Pro Tools, Avid and Digidesign VENUE systems;

- Yamaha's Standard snare drums—Vintage, Sensitive and Loud;
- Michael Kelly's Visionary guitar line;
- Ibanez's Montage acoustic/electric guitars;
- Hal Leonard's 'Guitar Hero' tab book;
- Dixon Drum sets—the Outlaw, Demon and Chaos;
- And, the entire Radial product line.

This year's judges were: Zach Phillips, editor of *Music Inc.* and *UpBeat Daily* magazines; Victor Salazar, general manager/event coordinator for The Drum Pad, Palatine, Ill.; Pete Gamber, owner of Alta Loma Music, Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.; Liane Rockley, co-owner of Rockley Music, Lakewood, Colo.; Ted Eschliman, co-owner of Dietze Music, a three-store chain in Nebraska; and Alan Friedman, gear nut, CPA and partner with Friedman, Kannenberg and Co., West Hartford, Conn.

"The choices this year were so diverse," said panel moderator Frank Alkyer, publisher of *DownBeat*, *Music Inc.* and *UpBeat Daily* magazines. "The panelists did a great job of getting a wide sampling of the best products and services the show has to offer. They combed through the very large booths as well as the very small. They considered the best-known brands in the industry as well as the new guys just starting out."

Below are the "Best In Show" winners, complete with comments from the panelist who selected them.

Round 1: Small Goods Rule

Our panelists were instructed to select a product that's small in size or small in price.

Zach Phillips: **Audio Technica AT2020 USB Microphone**
With the popularity of GarageBand and computer-based recording, this is a nice add-on, listing at \$249. It gives computer recordists a relatively inexpensive plug-and-play mic from a reputable manufacturer.

Victor Salazar: **LP GoJo Bags**
A great percussion accessory designed by Stephen Perkins of Jane's Addiction and Porno For Pyros. He's a bankable name with crossover appeal to drum set players who might not normally purchase a hand percussion item. Great price with a list of \$10 each. Different sounds can be achieved based on how it is played:

- muted/unmuted when shaken with either closed or open hand
- slide it to simulate afuche/cabasa sound
- toss it in the air in rhythm for added visual effect
- strap them to your hands and hit them together or play other hand percussion instruments.

Pete Gamber: **Rico Royal 3-Reed Packs**
The Old Box had 10 reeds — three reeds are an easier sell. Also, you can display them easier.

Dean Markley Strings in Retro Packaging
Same great strings with a lowered list/cost. And cool '70s graphics!

MicFX Microphone Sleeves
No more naked microphones. The graphics range from skulls to glitter to Spandex and more.

Core One Creative's Bullet Cables

Come on — skulls, guns and grenades on the tips of guitar cables. This is cool stuff posing as cable plugs.

Liane Rockley: **GHS Hand Master Plus**

This was small and unique. We have to remember to keep our customers after we get them and not have them succumb to injury.

Ted Eschliman: **High School Musical Guitar Picks from Hot Picks**

These are the latest entry into pick pop stardom. Riding on the coattails of the success of *High School Musical*, they serve to affirm the hipness of playing guitar for adolescents and tweens. *High School Musical* has their attention. Any gear that draws from that attention can only be beneficial to the musical products industry.

Alan Friedman: **GrabAxe Guitar-to-Amp Safety Strap**

I love this product because every guitar player has experienced the jolt of lightning that goes through our heart 1.7 seconds before the neck of our most expensive guitar slides off the side of our amp and hits the ground with the full force of its mass.

Round 2: Gotta Stock It!

These are products that our panelists wish were in their stores last Christmas, or at least yesterday!

Zach: **PianoDisc Sync-A-Vision**

It looks like a computer monitor in a piano desk flap, and in short, it adds a visual element to any piano equipped with a player system. It has 72 built-in music lessons, and it works with PianoDisc's video library. So, you can take out the piano part on, say, a PianoDisc Michael Buble video and play it yourself.

Victor: **Pearl BC-100S Convertible Flat/Tripod Base Boom Cymbal**

This is an affordable stand with wide appeal for drummers on a budget, gigging drummers needing versatile lightweight hardware, drummers seeking traditional flat base stands to complement a vintage kit and drummers seeking traditional looking stands with updated features

Pete: **Hal Leonard 'Sing with the Choir'**

A book that lets vocal students experience what it's like to be in choir. Soprano, alto, tenor, bass arrangements with CD — genius.

Hal Leonard Easy Rhythm Guitar books

Play the rhythm guitar part to great songs in an easy-to-follow format. The books have lyrics with a CD. It rocks! Great for students.

Alfred 'Kids Guitar Course'

Designed for kids 5 years old and up. Great cartoon graphics and a CD. It's a fun way to start guitar.

Alfred Dom Famularo Drum books

The Weaker Side helps drummers work on the hand that's weak to help

level both sides of your playing. *Eighth Note Grooves* is a great, fun book with CD backup tracks.

Liane: **Music Sales Transpo Gizmo**
Really good packaging. Small, won't tear like others of the past. Always a good seller.

Ted: **Elixir Guitar Cables**
We've had incredible success with the Elixir name in strings. There are plenty of boutique cables out there, but the rich branding opportunity with the Elixir name will generate immediate attention and credibility. We're going to kill with these.

Alan: **Radial Recoil Stabilizer**
I love this product because it's so important to have a great pair of studio monitors for mixing that produce a true sonic representation of the music we are recording, mixing and mastering, without adding rumble or losing audio clarity in key frequencies. This product eliminates unwanted noise and preserves the music as it is intended.

Round 3: Companies to Watch

Zach: **Audix**
Audix continues to put out quality microphones without much fat in its lineup. And the Cab Grabber is a fantastic accessory, listing at \$59. It replaces a mic stand when you need to mic a guitar amp cabinet. It clamps to a cabinet or head, and it's very sturdy.

Victor: **D'Addario**
They continue to expand the size of the company with their recent acquisition of Puresound, adding yet another dimension to their lines of top-quality accessories. The D'Addario family along with Rick Drumm and Mike Robinson have a proven track record of fine-tuning already successful product lines like Evans Drumheads, HQ pads and Planet Waves cables, and improving quality control, packaging, marketing and increasing the number of models. I'm anxious to see what they do with Puresound Wires. They are already regarded as the industry leader for top-quality wires.

Pete: **iCon Digital**
Cool wireless systems with a \$159 list. Keyboards with removable boards. A very cool, new company.

Retail Up!
Their new touch Screen POS system allows for younger staff to feel "at home" with this technology. For training retail salespeople: Click on the SKU, and pull up photo and info on the product. This software makes it harder for customers to stump the staff.

Liane: **ProActive Software**
Up and coming solution for e-commerce and Web sites. The company is committed to working with stores and individuals.

Ted: **Jupiter Band Instruments**
Jupiter started its visionary "Quantum Music Project" a couple years ago seeking to tackle the competitive marching equipment needs with a focus on improved intonation, tone quality, and playability in winds and percussion. The winds in their concert lines have already seen continual tweaking and improvement, and they will be introducing a revolutionary Quantum line next year, but this year's phase is the new drums and keyboard percussion. Walnut interior plies lend an unprecedented focus of sound, and their Majestic Mallets offer pure tone and durability at competitive pricing. New stands and proprietary Q-ball mounting are new tweaks in the Quantum line, and they've introduced the scaled-down Qualifier series for the middle school market.

Alan: **Traf Group/A-1 Collection Service**
While B&O instrument rentals are a lucrative activity for most music retailers, their success ultimately depends on the retailer's ability to collect delinquent receivables. The Traf Group provides the retailer with a professional customer correspondence service that turns the cost of A/R collections into a true profit center for the retailer.

Round 4: Trendsetters

Zach: **Acoustic Guitar Makers Go Electric**
Taylor SolidBody, Breedlove MK2, Vox Virage
We're seeing a lot of companies that don't make electric guitars putting out nice, high-end electrics. Most visibly, Taylor recently launched the SolidBody. It looks like a Gibson, feels perfect and has a beautiful pickup system. Breedlove, another acoustic guitar maker, has also put out a few high-end electrics. Vox has even relaunched a high-end electric guitar line, and Lace, a pickup manufacturer, has debuted its first guitars.

Victor: **Tama Hyper Drive Toms**
Hyper-Drive toms are extremely shallow in depth. They are now available in all mid- to high-level kits from Superstar to Starclassic Bubinga. The toms yield punch, attack, and tone. Their reduced sizes make them easier to transport and position on a kit. Tama already has a roster of endorsers playing these kits live and in the studio, and is featuring them in various ad campaigns to help the dealer promote sales.

Pete: **Eastman Wind Instruments**
These are top-quality Chinese trumpets and low brass. They stand behind their products with a five-year warranty. They have their own factory. On the flute side of the business, they own Haynes Flutes. And all flutes that come in are quality controlled at Haynes in the U.S. In short, Eastman offers great product, great warranty, great prices and great profits.

Liane: **Alfred "Jerry Lee Lewis: Killer Piano" DVD**
That book/media trend continues in print music. This DVD has printable PDF files and is downloadable to iPods.

Ted: **Yamaha Pocket Track 2G**
Mostly software-based, but it does have an on-board level meter for monitoring recording levels. The smallest of the current generation of

competitive MP3 recorders, its true strength is its ease of converting to computer editing. It also comes bundled with Cubase Digital Audio Workstation Software. Great for the lesson studio, recording performances and rehearsals, Website audio, and personal practice.

Alan:

RiffWorks from Sonoma Wire Works

I love this product because it provides every group of musicians the ability to create music in a collaborative effort with one another, even from halfway around the globe.

Round 5: Best In Show

Zach:

Digidesign Eleven

From the folks who brought us Pro Tools comes a plug-in that does a great job emulating every guitar amp you could want — all the tweeds, Voxes, Marshalls, etc. The tone is great, and the plug-in has a relatively simple user interface.

Victor:

Yamaha Standard Snares—Vintage, Sensitive and Loud

This is Yamaha's new line of Standard snare drums in wood. Within the line, they deliver three concepts of wood snares: Vintage, Sensitive and Loud. So, there's something for everyone. It's easy for the consumer to decide which model is best for him or her. They're great quality with great finishes and lug designs, and come in numerous sizes. Shell material, bearing edges, hoop type and thickness, and even hardware color varies between different concept snares. These are a great complement to any kit, especially Yamaha's new Phoenix set. And they're priced between \$759.99 and \$949.99.

Pete:

Michael Kelly Visionary Guitars

Guitars with adjustable necks for better action. They start at a \$199 street price. They have killer playability and even offer a built-in tuner.

Ibanez Montage Guitar from Hoshino

Hoshino, with the Ibanez Montage, has created a monster acoustic/electric guitar at a really affordable price point. Everything from tonal controls to on-board effects enhance the great playability for this guitar.

Liane:

Hal Leonard 'Guitar Hero Guitar' Tab Book

Hal Leonard is working to create some pre-tab with the *Guitar Hero* songs to get gamers playing a real guitar. Kids who play *Guitar Hero* think they can play the guitar already. If they think they can do it, they can! Hal is helping them make that transition.

Ted:

Dixon Drum sets from Kaman

This is a new line of drums with established roots in hardware, aimed at independent stores using MySpace, Facebook, YouTube for grass-roots market promotion. The promotions started with a "free drum" pitch, but what you can do is build off Internet referrals, and the lure of inexpensive and personal (local) community involvement. A student comes into the store (advertised by the manufacturer) and gets his or her picture taken, later to be posted on MySpace, Facebook, and/or YouTube. It's a strong traffic builder. Dixon is already an established brand under the Kaman umbrella and can attract customers to the store,

offering a quality drum set with effective hardware. The dealer gets involved in the marketing and promotion from the ground up.

Alan:

The entire Radial product line

I love the entire line of Radial products because they are smartly designed, well manufactured and provide musicians with a variety of solutions for routing audio signal in both studio recording and live performance environments.

#