



## EDITORIAL

# DO THE MATH... GO TO NAMM

According to *Supermarket Age*, an average sized grocery store typically rings up about 7,000 transactions a day. That's about what the biggest m.i. locations might do in a month, and it's a lot more than any piano stores do in a full year. The fact that the industry deals in relatively small unit volumes can make it difficult to clearly discern a trend line. What statisticians refer to dispassionately as the "volatility of small samples" translates into a roller-coaster ride at most music retail locations: One day the store is packed with customers the next day it's like a tomb.

Trying to figure out what's selling or where the market is going based on daily ups and downs is a major challenge. The fact that our national economy is in something of a state of flux makes it only more difficult. If we're in a recession, will it be protracted or short? Deep or shallow? Will the industry be seriously or marginally affected? There's no clear way to tell sifting through a few weeks of sales receipts. Which is why you should attend the NAMM show in Anaheim.

Every business faces a unique set of circumstances. In these columns, we can offer some broad based advice, but that isn't going to help you decide how to

best allocate your inventory dollars. That's where the trade show comes in. Walking the aisles, rubbing shoulders with other retailers, and gauging industry reactions to new products is the best way we know of taking stock of the market. The daily ups and downs at your store make it difficult to get a big picture, but the trade show can supply the necessary perspective.

Another point to consider: Market shares tend to be fairly static in up markets. It's when business gets a little iffy that the big opportunities open up. A competitor is distracted by internal problems, hard pressed customers demand new solutions, or challenged manufacturers are forced to reassess their distribution policies. These are just a few of types of opportunities that tend to present themselves in difficult times. Miss the trade show, and it's a good bet you'll miss some of these potential opportunities.

With airlines and hotels on the ropes, the cost of travel has never been less. With the business outlook murky right now, the potential benefits of getting to NAMM have never been higher. The math is simple anyway you add it up. Going to Anaheim is an investment that will pay off big time. If you have any questions, call NAMM at 1-800-767-NAMM. There's still time!

## GEORGE HARRISON, RIP

The world lost one of its greatest musicians with the untimely passing of former Beatle George Harrison. There has been an outpouring of tributes for the famed guitarist, detailing his simple but compelling solos, his unfailing generosity, and his lifelong quest for spiritual understanding. The picture that emerges is a man who was a rare combination of extraordinary talent and basic human decency.

For the music products industry, George Harrison was special because he made people around the world *want to play*. By inspiring millions to take up a guitar, he was a living embodiment of the amazing power of music. With just a few notes, he left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of a generation. To gauge

Harrison's power, just ask anyone 45 or over in the industry how they got involved with music. More often than not, the response will be, "I saw the Beatles on Ed Sullivan." While Harrison and the Beatles were initially a baby-boom phenomenon, his music and performances continue to inspire. Just consider that a compilation of 27 Beatles number one singles was the top selling album of 2000.

Through a long and varied career, Harrison embodied all that is wonderful about music. As an industry supplying the needs of musicians, we can bask a bit in his reflected glory. He will be missed, but not forgotten.

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