

## *How Many Shows Do We Need?*

One of the hot topics of debate in Atlanta last month was the question of whether NAMM should stage one or two trade shows per year. Advocates of a single NAMM show argue that two shows represent a time-consuming waste of precious promotional dollars. Those in favor of two shows per year counter that a bi-annual gathering of retailers and manufacturers provides the industry with a vital stimulus and facilitates keeping on top of rapidly changing product trends. As far as we're concerned, both sides raise valid points. However, the responsibility for determining whether the industry should have one or two shows does not rest with the NAMM board of directors; rather, it rests collectively with the industry's retailers and manufacturers.

Retailers and manufacturers are not compelled, by law, or any other reason for that matter, to participate in two NAMM shows a year. We assume that they come to shows because they feel that it is in their commercial interests to do so. For a manufacturer, participating at a NAMM show is just one more promotional expense in the ledger, like advertising, retail promotions, salesmen's bonuses, catalogues, posters, and dozens of other items. When advertising outlays, salesmen's compensation, or any other expense gets out of line, manufacturers seem to have little problem in making the necessary adjustments. We would suggest that manufacturers

approach their trade show spending in a similar spirit; if the expenditure for two shows doesn't produce an adequate return, manufacturers should make the necessary adjustments, rather than urging NAMM to eliminate a show.

This year in Atlanta, a number of leading manufacturers were conspicuous by their absence. While each manufacturer cited different reasons for pulling out, the common theme was, "We have more effective ways to spend our promotional dollars." In spite of the absences, over 400 manufacturers *did* attend the show, and a good number of them were pleased with their results. For these participants, the Summer NAMM show was a valuable service.

The music industry has had two large-scale trade shows per year only for the past decade. Prior to that, we made do with a single large show in the summer, plus various small-scale regional events. We may go back to having only one show in the near future; however, as long as manufacturers willingly exhibit at two shows, NAMM should continue to stage two shows. If manufacturers truly believe that two shows are a costly waste, we suggest that they express themselves as forcefully as possible, by either reducing their space or pulling out altogether.

*Brian T. Majeski*  
Editor

## *The Power Of Public Relations*

The Piano Manufacturers' recently unveiled "Piano Popularization Program" deserves high marks and should serve as something of a model for other joint industry promotional efforts. The plan boasts clearly defined and attainable goals and a realistic budget without making any wildly optimistic promises.

The heart of the piano makers' plan is an aggressive public relations campaign that will place feature articles advocating the benefits of piano playing in a variety of widely read publications. National advertising campaigns, like those used by the Dairy Council or the Florida Orange Growers, are undoubtedly effective but are unfortunately beyond the reach of the music industry's comparatively meager promotional budget. While public relations lacks the glamour quotient of slick national advertising, its effectiveness has been proven in countless situations.

A leading Washington political consultant recent-

ly remarked, "Favorable write-ups on a candidate carry infinitely more credibility than paid advertisements. All you can expect from ads is increased name recognition and maybe a better understanding of the candidate's views." We feel that the same holds true when it comes to promoting the benefits of music. Other segments of the industry looking to launch joint promotional efforts should also look into the benefits of a good public relations campaign before getting seduced by the possibilities of slick, but unaffordable, advertising.

Special praise also goes to NAMM for its funding of the Piano Manufacturers promotional campaign. We hope they will be equally generous when other proposals are submitted.

*Paul A. Majeski*  
Publisher