

Should The Show Be A Day Longer?

The first NAMM Winter Market, in 1971, was a hastily improvised gathering of around 50 exhibitors. Occupying only a corner of the basement of the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, the show was so small that most dealers could visit every exhibit in a half a day. Despite this, NAMM kept the doors open for three days.

Over the intervening years, the Winter Market has expanded dramatically to become one of the world's largest and most influential industry events. The most recent show bears little resemblance to that first Winter Market; however, both were three-day events. Which raises a question: Are three days enough time for the roughly 10,000 retailer personnel and the 625 exhibitors to conduct their business?

Following the conclusion of NAMM's recent record Winter Market, we received calls and letters from a large cross-section of retailers who protested that the show was simply not long enough. The common complaint was that with only three days, after visiting with a dozen major suppliers, little or no time was left to walk the aisles of the show in search of new products or ideas. Furthermore, the lack of time made it difficult to take advantage of the many NAMM-sponsored seminars.

Currently besieged by scores of educator, engineering, and consumer trade shows, most manufacturers have

been attempting to reduce, rather than expand, their trade show participation. Thus, it is doubtful whether a proposal to extend the Winter Market to four, or possibly five, days would receive an enthusiastic endorsement from the companies that foot the bill. We would urge that this proposal at least be given serious, if not enthusiastic, consideration.

For exhibitors, extending the show a day would mean only an extra night's hotel bill and another day away from the office. However, they would gain additional time to explain their products and programs to dealers. More time to explain is of particular significance, given the increasingly technical nature of many music and sound products.

Should the status quo be maintained, or should the Winter Market be extended by a few days? Those retailers in favor of a longer show make a compelling case. We invite all others to share their thoughts on the subject. The question is definitely worthy of debate.

Paul A. Majeski
Publisher

Guitar Promotion Guidebook

Whether you know it or not, April is International Guitar Month. If you haven't gotten involved with the Guitar and Accessories Music Marketing Association's industry-wide guitar promotion by now, chances are it's too late to start. Nevertheless, we would encourage every promotion-minded retailer to write to GAMMA and request a Guitar Month promotion kit.

The basic premise behind International Guitar Month is simply that if the industry's retailers and manufacturers coordinate their promotional activities during a defined time frame, they have a better chance of catching the public's eye and raising the awareness of the guitar. Due to the independent nature of most industry members, cooperative efforts like Guitar Month have always proved difficult to launch. Retailers generally shy away from getting involved with promotions that are available to their competition. By the same token, most manufacturers are reluctant to put any effort or energy behind promotions that are not directly related to their product line.

In spite of these obstacles, GAMMA deserves praise for

corralling the support of so many retailers and manufacturers. Thanks to this support, this year's Guitar Month should result in a large amount of free radio and print publicity.

Equally important, GAMMA has created a retail handbook outlining 50 exceptional retail guitar promotion ideas. Each of these promotions can be effectively launched any month of the year and is guaranteed to help stimulate sales. From staging "Hottest Guitarist Contests" to doing joint promotions with local radio stations, the Guitar Month handbook contains a wealth of useful information.

Successful music retailers are characterized by, among other things, consistent and effective promotional efforts. If you are interested in improving your guitar business, a good place to start is to call GAMMA at (212) 644-9090 and request a copy of the International Guitar Month promotion package.

Brian T. Majeski
Editor