

Video Games Revisited

For the past 50 years, a vocal segment within the music industry seems to believe that active amateur music making is in danger of extinction. Backed by statistics, demographics, and a host of other data, these doomsayers argue that music making no longer holds any appeal for our increasingly "passive" society and that "the end is near." Ironically, the strongest recent rebuttal to this point of view has come not from a musical instrument concern, but from a company that produces video game software. What adds to the irony is the fact that less than a decade ago, many argued that video games were undermining the music industry.

With the introduction of the "Miracle" Keyboard System, Software Toolworks Inc. is betting over \$20 million that there are over 400,000 individuals in the country who want to make their own music. For the uninformed, the Miracle Keyboard is a music instruction system that runs on a Nintendo game computer. Introduced this past Christmas in New York and Chicago, the "Miracle" system was backed by over \$1 million worth of print and broadcast advertising. Its creators hope to sell 400,000 units next year.

What is even more interesting is that the "Miracle" ad copy reads like a music industry promotion flyer. The ads stress that music is a mind-enriching activity and the perfect antidote to idiotic video games. Obviously, someone outside of the industry feels that our belief—that music is a mental discipline that will en-

hance any child—contains a lot of truth.

Whether the Miracle Keyboard succeeds or fails remains to be seen. Seven years ago, Mattel Toys had a brush with bankruptcy after its video game music keyboard was a complete flop. If the "Miracle" succeeds, music merchants will have little to show for it. The distribution of the product will, in all likelihood resemble, the distribution of portable keyboards.

But looking beyond the immediate specifics of the Miracle Keyboard, people in the music industry should take heart. After conducting exhaustive research, video game software designers reached an indisputable conclusion that seems to elude some within the music industry: A vast number of people of all ages would like to make their own music.

Translating that latent desire into a sale remains a difficult challenge, but music merchants should not lose sight of the fact that they are offering products and services that appeal to one of the most basic and enduring of human needs. Thus, for the resourceful, there will always be an opportunity in music.

If past precedent is any guideline, the future will experience continued upheavals in musical tastes, and the sale of specific musical instruments will rise and fall; yet the desire to play will remain unchanged.

Brian T. Majeski
Editor

Centennial Postscript

Since the release of the 100th Anniversary issue of *Music Trades* last month, we have been deluged with calls and letters of congratulations from around the globe. Time prohibits responding personally to all well-wishers, so we would like to take this opportunity to offer sincere thanks to the entire industry for their kind words and steadfast support.

Compiled from issues dating back to 1890, and other materials in our archives, our 100th Anniversary issue contained possibly the first ever all-inclusive music industry history. We assembled the issue as a tribute to all those who contributed to the music industry's evolution over the past 100 years, and to celebrate our own record of a century of continuous publication. (Over the past 100 years, despite two

World Wars and several economic catastrophes, *Music Trades* has never missed an issue.) Based on the response of our subscribers, our industry tribute was extremely well received.

In the depths of the Depression, my grandfather summed up our purpose when he wrote, "Such a trade paper as *The Music Trades* is the connecting link between the manufacturer and the retail merchant, and its function can not be performed by any other use of printer's ink." Much has changed in the ensuing 60 years, but our commitment to serving the industry remains the same. As we enter our second century, we thank all those who have contributed to our success.

Paul A. Majeski
Publisher