



EDITORIAL

FINDING SOME ANSWERS

It all started with Adam and Eve. Upon getting tossed out of the Garden of Eden, Adam reportedly observed, "Eve, we seem to be living in a time of great change." Since that fateful day, every subsequent generation has been preoccupied with change. In days gone by, examining animal entrails and consulting the heavens was the preferred method for attempting to anticipate the outcome of transition in progress. Today we turn to polls, focus groups, and statistics. Whether this amounts to progress, however, is open for debate.

Within the music products industry, this fixation with a shifting landscape is evident. The unanswered questions currently being pondered include:

"Are independent retailers about to be swept away by national chains?" "Has the guitar market peaked, or is there substantial growth to come?" "How long will this retro craze continue? Or, will consumers ever get tired of old stuff?" "Will the same demographics that have boosted the school music business give the piano industry a shot in the arm?" "Is there some new musical style or technology lurking around the corner that will change purchasing patterns?"

Questions that are tied to the moment are augmented by a long list of favorites that always seem worth asking. "Will business hold up in the coming 12 months, or are we headed for a recession?" "Which way are interest rates headed, and should I borrow now or hold off?" "Is this the time for aggressive expansion, or is caution more appropriate?" Not to mention, "Who should I bet on in this year's Super Bowl?" If it weren't for limits of space and reader attention span, the list of questions could go on forever.

Nobel prize winner Milton Friedman once observed that economists offer predictions not because they have any particular insights, but simply because they are asked. Thus, we will abstain from any sweeping forecasts; however, to all those seeking answers to the questions above, we do offer a simple suggestion: Be sure to attend the Winter NAMM show.

With thousands of retailers, consumers, and manufacturers packed under a single roof, along with the world's most comprehensive display of music and sound products, the show provides a unique opportunity to try to figure out what the next 12 months hold for your business and the industry at large. In four days you can conduct your own retail poll, assess the latest manufacturer offerings, and get a general feel for the business climate. It's hard to imagine any investment with a better pay-off. So act now, call your travel agent, call NAMM at 1-800-767-NAMM, and plan to attend. If you want some bankable answers to any of the questions listed above, go to the show.

Brian T. Majeski
Editor

Thanks, Scott

In the next year, an estimated 30 million visitors to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. will tour a new exhibit on the electric guitar and hopefully walk away with a better understanding of how the instrument affected the world we live in, and the contributions of pioneers like Fender, Gibson, Rickenbacker, and Bigsby.

The Smithsonian's stated mission is to preserve things "uniquely American," yet for the past 50 years its musical instrument exhibit has all but ignored the "uniquely American" guitar and focused primarily on Italian violins. The new guitar exhibit represents an about-face at the museum and is due entirely to the efforts of Scott Chinery.

Vintage guitar aficionados know Chinery as the keeper of one of the world's greatest guitar collections. Over the past decade he has acquired several thousand instruments that reflect every aspect of the guitar maker's art. Looking for a way to present his collection to a wider audience, he cajoled and persuaded Smithsonian curators, battled with a huge bureaucracy, and ultimately even footed the bill for the exhibit.

What can you say about someone who expends time and money to better acquaint the American public with musical products? The music industry owes Scott Chinery a debt of gratitude for all his efforts, and we'd like to be the first to offer our thanks.