

# the MUSIC & SOUND Retailer



## NRF TALKS JOBS, JOBS AND MORE JOBS

By Brian Berk

Make no mistake about it. The number one factor affecting the retail environment in 2011 and 2012 is the economy. Included under that economic umbrella is unemployment, something speakers often mentioned in 2009 and 2010. Matthew Shay, new president and CEO of the National Retail Federation, stressed that point during NRF's 100th annual show, which drew more than 21,000 people at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City. "Will we see Congress and the administration think more seriously about legislation that will truly stimulate job growth?" he asked. "Will they focus on investment and consumption? It's too soon to tell. For our part, we will redouble our efforts to build the relationships with the administration and members of Congress on both sides of the aisle.... We will spend that time encouraging them to adopt policies for investment and consumption."

Shay added that, while the economy was challenging in 2010, retailers such as you got the job done. Some of the ways that was accomplished was by having tighter inventory controls, launching more private-label goods and more. However, "the relatively strong

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**A huge NAMM photo collage ..... P.22**

**The complete list of Music & Sound Award Winners ..... P.42**

**Five Minutes With: Tak Nakata, president, Yamaha Corp. of America ..... P. 49**

## By Dan Ferrisi

There was a time when manufacturers considered exhibiting in Hall E at the NAMM show in Anaheim a death sentence. "No dealers come down there," some would bark. NAMM has certainly listened to those concerns, especially for 2011. For the first time, NAMM presented its Media Preview Day in Hall E. Also, if you wanted a press badge or to hang out in the press room, you had to travel to the area directly in front of Hall E.

To many retailers, Hall E has become the place to see the hottest new products. Perhaps it has become a destination.

Our annual "Class of" story shines the spotlight on first-time NAMM exhibitors that stood out from the crowd and got the show floor buzzing. Who knows? Maybe, 10 or 20 years from now, a few of these companies will stand among our industry's

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## GIBSON INDICTMENTS LIKELY

By Brian Berk

Indictments are expected to be made soon against Gibson Guitar regarding wood it allegedly imported from Madagascar via Germany. This assumption is based on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Special Agent Kevin Seiler's affidavit that included the statement, "[i]ndictments are anticipated and defendant property is expected to be used in prosecution of that matter."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife agency already seized six guitars made of ebony wood, 56 gigabytes of computer data and more from Gibson's Massman Drive facility in Nashville after search warrants were issued by judge E. Clifton Knowles. Gibson is accused of violating the 1894 Lacey Act, which makes it illegal for any person to "import, export, transport, sell, receive, acquire or purchase in interstate or foreign commerce" particular merchandise. In this case, the Republic of Madagascar, since 2000, has had various laws that restrict the harvest and export of ebony wood.

If convicted, it's unknown what Gibson's pun-

ishment could be. Past violations of the Lacey Act have ranged from small fines stemming from misdemeanor charges to much more serious criminal accusations. It is possible criminal

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### HAVE YOU SEEN IT?



MSRetailer.com/Vnewsletter

# Sharon Hennessey

**Vice President and Owner,  
The Music People!/On Stage Stands**

**By Brian Berk**

Sharon Hennessey was introduced to the music industry at a young age. As a child, she often visited her father, who worked at the Ovation factory in New Hartford, Conn., along with her brother. “It was really interesting,” she said. “We had a complete run of the factory. Nobody was in there except ourselves. My brother and I actually pretended to be businesspeople. I was a businesswoman and would call him on the phone. ‘Send that report over,’ I remember having said.”

When Hennessey was 12, her father Jim founded The Music People! That was not an easy decision, considering he had four children at home. But he took the entrepreneur route because what he had learned when he attended many concerts during the Ovation days was, “There were so many guitars on stage and nothing really to hold them up,” Hennessey said. “His first passion was to create the first double and triple guitar stand. As a young child, we did our first mailing promoting the products he designed. I remember licking stamps in the basement of our house. I continued to have some involvement through junior high school and high school. I would come by after school. I worked helping returns and inspecting cables.”

Hennessey became more and more involved with The Music People! by working part time while she attended school. But Hennessey said she never attended college thinking she would work for The Music People! “Nor did my father ever ask me to work for the family business,” she said.

Hennessey pursued education and special education in college. She planned to become a teacher. Hennessey graduated from college and served as a teacher for one year. That’s when something changed in her life. “I had an opportunity to go to my first NAMM show,” she said. “My father knew, once I had that exposure, I’d probably want to go to work for The Music People!. I was 21 or 22 years old. I got to hang out at the pool the entire day. I didn’t have to work at the booth or set up the booth.”

Hennessey vividly remembers walking into the Anaheim Hilton and attending a concert. “I saw the energy level and the vibe,” she recalled. “I had a great week in Anaheim.

I met a lot of great people with whom I’m still friendly today. My father knew a lot of people in the industry and he introduced me. I saw how friendly people were to one another.”

Hennessey went home to Connecticut and didn’t talk about her wonderful NAMM experience for some time. But, a few months later, she liked what she saw so much that Hennessey joined The Music People! She started in the return authorization segment of the business. Hennessey also learned the business by serving as an assistant in many departments. “After working there full time for two years,” she said, “there was an opportunity to open a West Coast distribution center. My father asked me to do it. When I look back on it, it was a pretty big deal at 24 years old to pick up and move to California. We had no connections there. I didn’t have a place to live.”

Not only did Hennessey open a West Coast distribution center, but she also built a sales force there. She recalls the first day she walked into the Long Beach building that was empty. Hennessey lived with the Pollard family in Seal Beach, whom she had met at the NAMM show on a couple of occasions. They had helped set up The Music People! booth.

Hennessey soon found an apartment that she shared with two male surfers in Sunset Beach. She made deliveries to local music stores and also unloaded containers. The distribution center became a huge success. But there were challenges. Hennessey had to overcome her shyness, for example. But she had the passion needed. She believed in the company’s products. “I felt retailers wanted affordable pricing, quality products and profitable items that can help support your overhead,” she said. “The service we provided became the forefront of my entire career. I became an advocate of the retailer early on. When I moved back to Connecticut, I handled sales for the top stores in the United States. I



took ownership of several accounts. I was on the road and in the trenches. I really got to

learn what a retailer’s needs were.”

“Nobody can believe I was really shy back then,” she added.

## **An Engaging Industry**

Relationships are what first interested Hennessey in MI. It’s also one of the main drivers that has kept her in our industry. Perhaps not everyone has had an “Only in MI moment.” However, Hennessey certainly has one. “I would never go into a bathroom and leave my wedding and engagement rings on the sink,” she said. “But something in our [Nashville Summer NAMM] booth stuck to my finger. I took them off so I could wash my hands. I returned to the booth and had a meeting with a top company in the industry. I had never met them before. I began the meeting and, about 20 minutes later, I turned completely white and realized both of my rings were gone. I walked in a complete panic back to the bathroom. They weren’t there. I knew I was in big trouble. NAMM had a place I could go to. [NAMM President and CEO] Joe Lamond made an announcement over the intercom that I lost my wedding ring and engagement ring. Sure enough, an hour later, a dealer turned in the rings to NAMM. I had them back.”

The next morning, Lamond used that example during a breakfast session to describe how amazing our industry is. “What other industry could you be in that you could lose something of that value and have it returned?” said Hennessey. “What an incredible industry we are in.”

## **Speaking of NAMM...**

Hennessey was elected as one of NAMM’s new board members on Jan. 15. She was nominated and voted upon by retailers. “I’m honored,” she said. “I’m looking forward to

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we go to find the information.”

“If you present the customer with the same product as your competitor, it will get you nowhere,” Cheshire said. “But if you get the customer involved on a social networking site, they can really feel they are getting closer to a product. They can feel they are part of the process. And that customer can sell your brand to their friends.”

### Lessons Learned

Dr. Greene wondered whether, if economic times return to a “boom” stage, retailers would forget about some of the lessons learned during these dark times. Here were some thoughts from the panel:

“Focus on your customer,” said Rubel. “Innovate for them. Focus on where they shop, how they shop and why they shop. Innovate for them every day.”

“One thing we don’t want to do for the future is to look too much inside the company,” Del Vecchio said. “We tend to like something we do very much and want to continue it. But you have to focus on what the customer really needs and become their partner. You have to make the customer experience great for them.”

“The one good thing about a

recession is you have to create your own worth,” said Cheshire. In good times, you tend to assume you’ll grow with the market. It’s been a painful, but good, experience for us. We were able to put our hats in order. As has been said, you have to focus on the customer. You also have to look for market share gains. Create your own growth. Growth through initiatives is the key thing to take from this painful experience. There are a lot of growth opportunities. But you have to focus on them and get serious about them.”

Creating your own growth is certainly a key. However, help from the U.S. government never hurts. “The next big policy will focus around how we will address our fiscal problems,” Zandi said. “It’s going to require spending restraint and tax increases. On the spending side, it’s very important to focus on education, skills and infrastructure. The key to the U.S. economy is talented people.”

“We need to focus on job creation,” said Rubel. “Free trade is very important, as well. You need to take away tariffs to make it easier to export goods elsewhere. I do believe the government has been focusing on that

### FORMIDABLE FEMALES

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meeting a lot of people, getting a lot of information and creating value. I’ve been in the industry for more than 20 years and there are still so many people I don’t know. I’m excited to meet those folks and share stories. It also is another avenue for me to continue to be an advocate for dealers.”


When Hennessey is not working at The Music People! or traveling, she can be found out on the golf course. In fact, she met her husband because he was the golf pro at the Hartford Golf Club. The future couple was going to play golf on their first date. “I went golfing at another course early in the morning with three gentleman that day,” she remembered. “I had such a great time on the front nine that I called [my future husband] and told him I had to reschedule the date because I was going to play another nine holes with the same gentlemen. He later told me that

he said at that time: ‘I’m in love. I just met a woman who blew me off for golf.’”

Think fate doesn’t exist? “On our first date, he bet on a horse named Hennessey’s Best and the horse won.”


Hennessey claimed her golf game has progressed so much that she is now better than her golf pro husband.

The Hennesseys have a 6-year-old son named James Hennessey Mullarkey. Sharon Hennessey showed us the family holiday card she sent out in December and then said, “He has a desk at The Music People! He knows 40-footers and 20-footers. He understands 40-footers are more cost effective for freight costs.”

Hennessey also serves on another board: the one at St. Francis Hospital in Hartford. “The industry served as a great stepping stone for me to help to give back,” she said. 

much more recently. But we must move away from the rhetoric and focus on the policy.”

“The key focus in Europe is [also] on creating jobs,” Cheshire said. “Private sector investment is vital for growth.”

“We’ve heard some really consistent answers,” concluded Dr. Greene. “We need to focus on investing in capital, job skills and making sure we don’t encumber the free-trade process. All are certainly important for retail.” 

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## Stairway to Heaven

**Overview:** Alfred Music Publishing's Led Zeppelin Songbooks

**Specifics:** Alfred Music Publishing, the official print music publisher of Led Zeppelin, announced its completion of more than two dozen authentic transcription, arrangement and play-along songbooks, collectively assembling all nine of the rock band's studio albums in songbooks for guitar, bass, drums, and piano and voice. Led Zeppelin Ultimate Play-Along songbooks allow guitarists, bassists and drummers to play along to their favorite Led Zeppelin classics in their home, without needing a full band behind them. Featuring authentic transcriptions of many of their greatest hits, each of these songs is written in music notation, as well as additional TAB versions for the guitar and forthcoming bass books. The included CDs contain instrumental sound-alike recordings and accom-



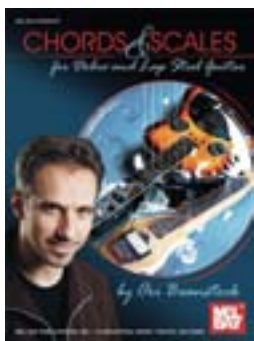
paniment tracks, as well as Alfred's TNT (Tone 'N' Tempo) Changer.

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## Man of Steel



**Overview:** Mel Bay's Chords & Scales for Dobro and Lap Steel Guitar

**Specifics:** Chords & Scales for Dobro and Lap Steel Guitar, by Ori Beanstock, is published by Mel Bay Publications. It's a visual way to master chords and scales on six-string Dobro and lap steel guitars in open G tuning. All chord and scale positions are presented as graphs, letting the player familiarize himself with the instrument. Each graph describes a different position, showing the neck to its full length so the player will see the book as if the instrument is lying on his lap. The book offers numerous chord options in all 12 keys as well as a clear picture of how to capture scale and mode positions. The use of slants and reversed positions in this book lets the player learn as many chord positions as possible.

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