

# THE EXCELLENCE ISSUE

FOR PROGRESSIVE MUSIC RETAILERS

DECEMBER 2013  
MUSICINCMAG.COM

# music inc.



# SAM ASH MUSIC

**VETERAN LEADERSHIP  
BRINGS THE COMPANY  
INTO ITS 90TH YEAR**

2013 \*  
MUSIC INC.  
RETAILER OF  
THE YEAR \*

**MORE WINNERS INSIDE!**

PEAVEY | D'ADDARIO | HARRIS-TELLER | KAWAI | ST. LOUIS MUSIC  
HAL LEONARD | KORG | KHS | KMC MUSICORP | YAMAHA

SWEETWATER | WEST MUSIC | GUITAR CENTER | CORNER MUSIC | QUINLAN & FABISH  
UNIQUE SQUARED | STRINGS & BEYOND | ALTO MUSIC | KRAFT MUSIC

**PLUS:  
PRODUCT  
EXCELLENCE**



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*On the cover, from left:* Sammy Ash, COO; Stu Leibowitz, CFO; Howie Mendelson, EVP Stores; Richard Ash, CEO; Barry Horowitz, SVP Purchasing; John Pereksta, National Sales Manager; David Ash, Co-CEO and General Counsel.

Cover photo by Ken Schles



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# SUPPLY

HOHNER | BY JESSICA TOBACMAN

## HARMONIC INNOVATION

For most companies, nearing a 160th anniversary while continuing to release new, innovative products seems like an unattainable goal. But it is exactly what is happening at Hohner. One of these products is the AirBoard, set to debut at The NAMM Show in January. The colorful, portable mix of piano and harmonica is an updated version of Hohner's Melodica, which was invented about 50 years ago, became popular in Europe, and thus far has been sold mainly to educators.

"We've been working on the AirBoard for about a year," said Scott Emmerman, director of marketing and sales. "The idea is to get people interested in this new, really cool instrument. It's like having a portable piano that has a unique voice. You blow into it, and you don't need a computer or cables. We hope this product will reach a whole new audience. We've previewed Airboard to some of our key customers and they've all agreed that it looks like it will be a big hit."

The AirBoard represents a renewed focus for the company.

"In the past seven years, we've continued to focus on the evolution of our core products," Emmerman said. "The AirBoard



represents the most recent example of this strategy."

### EXPANDING MARKETS

Another area of innovation is Hohner's new line of Latino string instruments, also planned to launch at the

upcoming NAMM Show. The instruments are ideal for many Latino musical genres, including mariachi, norteno, conjunto, tejano and Tex-Mex.

"We're seeing real growth in the products that are used in making Latino oriented music,"

Emmerman said.

Called the H. Jimenez series after its designer Hilario "Layo" Jimenez, a well-respected guitar, bajo quinto, and lute player, the product line will include a five-string Vihuela, a six-string Guitarron, eight models of the 10-string Bajo Quinto and three nylon-stringed guitar models.

"Layo has great insight to traditional build quality, yet he adds his own, player-friendly spin," said Rock Clouser, product manager for Hohner U.S. "The H. Jimenez series will continue Hohner's support of Latin music genres and certainly complement our Hohner accordions — a favorite of Latin musicians for more than 100 years."

### BEYOND HARMONICAS

When Matthias Hohner launched his harmonica company in Germany in 1857, he couldn't have known the Latin market would become a core component of his namesake's success. But growth was certainly evident. By the turn of the century, the company had reached 1,000 employees and was making 4 million harmonicas a year. By 1920, 4,000 employees were helping to produce 20 million instruments — and acquisitions began.



Hohner himself “had an eye to the world market, and was very forward-thinking with his approach to marketing and sales,” Emmerman said. “He targeted other countries around the world and found ways to connect with each of them by celebrating something in their cultures.”

Accordions followed the harmonica, and then the Melodica.

“Hohner’s heart and soul is reed instruments, such as the harmonica, accordion and melodica, that’s where the company started,” Emmerman said. “Over the years, we have added fretted instruments, such as the acoustic guitars, banjos,

mandolins, ukuleles, as well as Hohner Kids and Green Tones Musical Toys to the Hohner portfolio.”

#### WIDER REACH

Hohner continues to produce the 1896 Marine Band Har-

those core products. Hohner founded a U.S. division to distribute Sabian Cymbals, Hohner Fretted Instruments, and Sonor Drums and Percussion products in 1986, and fully acquired the Sonor brand in 1991.

Part of the evolution parallels

been, and continues to be, part of jazz and classical music, but has jumped in and out of the spotlight for different reasons over the decades.

“The harmonica was never really designed to be a blues instrument, but many blues guitarists, like the early Mississippi Delta musicians accompanied themselves with a harp,” Emmerman said. “Sometimes, what’s happened naturally in popular music can affect the popularity of certain



The AirBoard

monica, one of the most enduring products in the industry, and its original calling card to the world. But it has diversified well beyond

the ever-changing popularity of music styles. The harmonica, for instance, was played by soldiers during the Civil War, and has

instruments.

“We see great opportunities for all of our Hohner instruments in the future.” **MI**