



Pearl's Shawn Lafrenz and Steve Armstrong



Remo's Brian LeVan and Johnny Lee Lane



Vic Firth's Mark Wessels and Chuck Moulton

# LOOKING FOR MORE

BY ALEX HARRELL

## Suppliers tackle the growing demands in the drum industry at the 2016 PASIC

**T**he 55th Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) was the culmination of the industry's response to the creative challenges that the drum market presents each year.

Over 5,000 drummers, marching band members and percussionists alike flocked to Indianapolis with one thing in common: Looking for more — be it more personalized gear or more specific sounds — to keep up with the evolving industry that continues to expand into new markets and age demographics.

Joshua Simonds, executive director at the Percussive Arts Society (PAS), said the event, held Nov. 9–12, 2016, was a huge success.

"I am confident that creating a shared vision by all will be great for our future," he said. "And we saw that taking shape."

### MORE, PLEASE!

"The overall trend is just more, more and more," said Shawn Lafrenz, Pearl's senior marketing manager. "The activity itself, the interest in percussion just continues to grow; everything is coming together."

And "more" isn't an understatement, either, with drum suppliers reporting that musicians want more customization and

more vintage revivals. Not to mention, there's more diversity in the types of drummers entering the industry.

"It's a real melting pot of activity right now," Lafrenz said.

Brian LeVan, national sales manager for Remo, agreed. "Everybody is looking for something different; it's less of a cookie-cutter industry at this point," he said. "It's more individualized."

Vic Firth tackled the increasing demand for individuality in the market by launching a customization initiative at PASIC.

"We now have a way for anybody to get their custom logo put on their sticks," said Mark Wessels, director of digital marketing at Vic Firth. The company took its most popular models and offers three sizes (12, 36 or 72 pairs) available for personalization.

"It's really nice for somebody that's going to buy a brick of sticks at a time," Wessels said. "For not very much money, they can get their logo custom printed on the stick."

### VINTAGE VIBES

Not only has individualism become a hot commodity, but vintage revival is on the upswing as well.

"Something old is cool again," said Sergio Bonsignore, product manager for Evans

Drumheads. The company's newest release, the '56 Calftone, series' tagline is "vintage sound for a modern world," he explained. The series of bass heads are vintage-inspired to sound like a natural calf-skin product, but feature a synthetic material; thus sparking the hybrid name, Calftone.

Evans isn't the only company to revive old fan favorites. To cater to drummers searching to recreate old school sounds, Zildjian launched the Avedis line.

"These are cymbals that have the sounds of the 1960s and '70s that people are looking for, that they're experimenting [with] right now," said Victor Filonovich, category manager for cymbals at Zildjian. "Demand was big — people were looking for something like that and we obviously answered it," he said.

On a different note, the electronics side of the industry is feeling the vintage vibes of the 1980s; a resurgence in the excitement surrounding electronic instruments and start-up companies emerging with new tools.

"We all want to merge electronic drums and acoustic drums and just make drums," said Mike Snyder, product manager of drums and percussion at ATV. "I think that's everyone's attitude now because everyone knows you need the right tool."





Evans Drumheads' Sergio Bonsignore



PreSonus' Micah Blouin

Yet, unlike the beginning of the electronics market, there's no stigma attached to playing an electronic drum kit; it's no longer the "bastard child" of the music industry, Snyder explained. That stigma has been slowly changing as technology gets better and as younger players are becoming increasingly used to holding an iPad instead of a drumstick or mallet.

#### DIVERSIFYING THE DRUM LINE

What's not a blast from the past, however, is the increasingly diversifying type of drummer. The No. 1 new audience? Kids.

Micah Blouin, educational market manager for PreSonus, explained that he deals largely with filling the gap between teachers and educators who were classically trained in music on how to use mixers, interfaces and navigating recording software; what their students are most comfortable with.

PreSonus released the StudioLive 32, a mixer designed for both studio and live use. Blouin stated that even students as young as six are using the mixer in the classroom. This technology gives children the opportunity to make music without — or before — understanding the fundamentals.

"This trend in academia is really moving

toward using more of this equipment in those traditional settings, but in non-traditional ways," he said. "They're our next user — it's our current user, but they'll continue to grow with us."

Marching and percussion continues to be strong for Ludwig as well, according to Ryan Galasso, educational category manager.

"The growth of things like the Winter Guard International is driving the industry; students are able to play year round now, versus it just being a summer or fall activity," he said. "Kids can keep their hands playing all year, which is making a lot of improvement in the ability level of the average student."

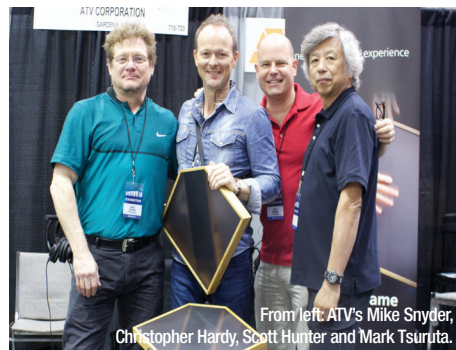
Ivan Martinez, business developer at Tycoon Music, agreed, stating that schools are driving business. "It's becoming increasingly popular to start at a younger, educational level," Martinez said.

Innovative Percussion even released the Rookie stick within the Reid Maxwell series — the first pipe band snare drumstick made specifically for younger players, explained Chris Long, vice president of operations.

"With it being 2016 and all of the technologies out there, there's no reason we can't make it possible for every kid to enjoy music if they want to," said Derek Felix, percussion specialist at Chops Percussion. **MI**



From left: Zildjian's Adam Cocio, Jerry Smith and Victor Filonovich.



From left: ATV's Mike Snyder, Christopher Hardy, Scott Hunter and Mark Tsuruta.



From left: Ludwig's Ryan Galasso, Conn-Selmer's Jim Catalano and Rick Hanby and Ludwig's Jamey Lafavers.



Hal Leonard's David Cywinski and Tycoon Music's Ivan Martinez



Innovative Percussion's Ethan Chastain and Chris Long