



THE BEAT GOES ON

By Alex Harrell

With a redesigned exhibit hall, PASIC 2017 delivered new technology and catered to re-emerging markets without missing a beat

The percussion world underwent major upgrades at the 42nd PASIC Show — visible in terms of new products, growing audiences and a different format.

The Indiana Convention Center exhibit hall underwent a redesign this year, resulting in a snake-like traffic pattern with added walls for improved sound separation between larger, louder companies and smaller, quieter ones.

Joshua Simonds, executive director of the Percussive Arts Society (PAS), said the event, held in Indianapolis from Nov. 8–11, 2017, was a success with nearly 5,500 attendees.

CRAZY FOR CAJONS

To appeal to the student-based audience at PASIC, Gon Bops highlighted its Fiesta Series which includes introductory-level

timbales, congas, bongos and cajons. Luis Cardoso, Gon Bops' brand manager, noted that cajons are "finally cooling off" while conga and timbale sales are on the upswing.

"Conga and timbale sales have been dead for a long time," he said. "But everybody is saying they're coming back, and we're noticing it and selling more, too."

Though Gon Bops' cajon sales have simmered down, Vic Firth continues to see the cajon dominate the industry.

"There are so many cajons sold because it makes for a really nice sound that's very portable," said Mark Wessels, Vic Firth's director of digital marketing. "We started noticing our retailers stocking so many cajons because everybody wants one."

So, Vic Firth released the Cajon Bru-llet,

a cross between a brush and a mallet (hence the name) that can make sweeping sounds as well as super soft, quasi-bass tones.

Another innovation with mallets was underway at Promark by D'Addario's booth. But while Vic Firth focused on finding new sounds, Promark sought out solutions.

MIDIS & MALLETS & MORE

Traditionally, mallets are made by buying a core and shaft from a hardware store, building the rattan, drilling a hole into the core, inserting the shaft and then gluing and nailing it together, according to Elijah Navarro, Promark's product manager.

"The problem is those mallets are destined for failure because you can weaken the bond between the core and the shaft," he said.



1) Remo's Bruce Jacoby, Johnny Lee Lane, Bob Yerby and Brian LeVan 2) Vic Firth's Mark Wessels and Amber Fox 3) Gon Bop's Luis Cardoso 4) Alfred Music's Victoria Meador and Jennifer Paisley 5) Zildjian's Paul Francis, Christian Lyman and Jeff Westhaver 6) Yamaha's Paul Winterhalter and Dave Gerhart

"We've reinvented it."

Promark announced it's now only injection molding the mallet's core materials, over-molding over a threaded insert via a two-part proxy that creates a mechanical lock.

"We've increased our durability, or pull-out force, by 100 percent," Navarro said. "This solves the No. 1 problem that mallets have — and have always had — on the market."

Plus, Promark took 100-plus years of technology from D'Addario and adapted how it wraps guitar strings to how it wraps mallets to create a proprietary patented process.

"We went from the ground up to solve problems in the market," he said. "This is going to make some noise in the B&O sector as well as the marching sector."

Pearl, on the other hand, had an entirely

different solution in mind.

"We wanted to bring a mallet control to the market that was affordable for everybody," said Matt Jordan, concert profession marketing manager at Pearl. Enter the company's three-octave USB MIDI mallet controller, the malletStation, designed in partnership with Keith McMillen Instruments. The malletStation model EM1 features a master control section, along with three assignable pedal inputs that allow for flexibility in performance such as sustain, expression or any MIDI parameter of the user's choice.

"We've done a really good job of having all of the advanced MIDI features but in an user-transparent way," Jordan said. And the driving factor behind adopting MIDI devices, he explained, was actually marching bands.

ON THE MARCH

"Percussion activity has increased over the last five or 10 years," said Nick Phillips, marketing manager at Innovative Percussion. "High school level programs are expanding and marching is growing, especially with the increased popularity of the indoor drum lines."

Dave Gerhart, product manager for Yamaha Percussion, also said that the growth stems from high school indoor groups. As a result, Yamaha released its Impact Drums with extended floor tom legs, geared toward marching and percussion ensembles.

"Kids are marching year-round — it's not just during the summer with DCI or the fall marching band," Gerhart said. "Everyone is playing year-round [now]; there are no lulls anymore." **MI**