

the

MUSIC &amp; SOUND

## Retailer



## CAN TEXAS HOLD 'EM?



By Brian Berk

Cha-cha-cha-cha-changes in the locale are taking place next month at Summer NAMM. The next stop is Austin, Texas, and it's certainly no stretch to say it will be the most important Summer NAMM in its history. Taking place from July 14 to 16, NAMM hopes to turn the Lone Star State into the Music Star State. Headed by Austin Mayor Will Wynn and Robert Lander, president and CEO of the Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau, as well as the NAMM staff of

course, the red carpets are expected to be rolled out for NAMM attendees, and the self-proclaimed "Live Music Capital of the World" is set to deliver an excellent experience for attendees.

**As Summer NAMM heads to Austin, is it time to go "all in?"**

Although Austin clearly has a massive music history, it still needs to be conducted to hosting a trade show. NAMM President and CEO Joe Lamond cited a couple of reasons why he has been so impressed with Austin, including the plethora of live music venues. (see Texas on page 38)

## MI Spy

Spy is off to the "Gateway to the West" this month to see The Arch, and of course, check out music instrument stores. Spy is on the lookout for a violin. **Pg. 21**

## Toy Store

John Jorgenson has had a ton of MI experiences and he's played with some of the best, including Elton John, Roy Orbison, and K.D. Lang. He even appeared in a movie with Charlize Theron and Penelope Cruz. **Pg. 38**

## Veddatorial

It's time to change your approach. It's time to focus on the customer, as opposed to the product, says Dan Vedda. He explains why. **Pg. 38**

## SCHOOL'S OUT?

Should shrinking school budgets send B&O dealers into new markets?

By Michelle Loeb

For as long as band and orchestra dealers can remember, the model remained the same—band directors acting as a liaison between the dealer and the influential school market. However, with budgets being cut, cheap band instruments from abroad infiltrating the marketplace, and the Internet lending new and advanced

is the industry at a point of change?

Dan Vedda of Ohio's Skyline Music thinks so. "I think there are tremendous possibilities for the stores that embrace the music making population in general, regardless of whether or not they're in a school program," said Vedda, who thinks the current model is outdated. "Basically

## Honoring the Life of Mike Kovins

By Brian Berk

I know that news stories appearing on the cover of the magazine are always supposed to be unbiased in every way. However, I find that impossible to do in this case. It's also impossible to write this story with a dry eye. Korg USA President Michael Kovins lost his battle with Leukemia on May 2. He was 57. Kovins was diagnosed with the disease nine years ago and died at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital in New York City. He was an employee at Korg for 26 years and served as president for 14. When interviewing



# JOHN JORGENSEN

And All That Gypsy Jazz

## By Michelle Loeb

John Jorgenson has been described as one of the pioneers of the American gypsy jazz movement, but his résumé boasts collaborations and performances with high-profile artists in many musical disciplines. He co-founded The Desert Rose Band with ex-Byrds member Chris Hillman in the 1980s; spent 18 months as a member of Elton John's band playing guitar, saxophone, pedal steel, and mandolin; and worked with Johnny Cash, Little Richard, Michael Nesmith of the Monkees, and Bonnie Raitt.

Jorgenson has even appeared on the big screen, portraying Django Reinhardt in "Head in the Clouds," starring Charlize Theron and Penelope Cruz. You'll soon be hearing Jorgenson's guitar work on Peter Frampton's next record, but first you'll hear all about his life, from growing up with music educator parents to playing alongside Roy Orbison and K.D. Lang.

**The Music & Sound Retailer:** You performed at Winter NAMM. Is this the first one you attended or do you often get to go?

**John Jorgenson:** I've gone to the NAMM show nearly every year since about 1968. My dad was a music educator, so he'd go there looking for music for his bands and ensembles and stuff, and I went with him. When I became a professional musician I went every year, a lot of times just as an interested observer. Then I started getting hired to represent different companies and play for different companies. In fact, in 1985 I was jamming with David Grisman at the Saga booth and I met Chris Hillman [of The Byrds] at that moment. Chris and I ended up getting together and forming a group called The Desert Rose Band. That was the first time I got an international record deal

and started performing in other countries and all over the [U.S.] and getting on radio and television and all that kind of stuff. So the NAMM show actually has been a crucial element in my career.

**M&SR:** How do you come up with the specs for your signature models?

**Jorgenson:** I've done a signature model guitar with G&L, two different ones with Fender, two different flat-top acoustics with Takamine, and now three gypsy-style ones with Gitane and Saga. So what I normally do is first find a company that builds an instrument that I really think is good, just the quality. And then I find a model within that line that has a lot of features I like. Then I go from there with adding different elements I've seen from other instruments of the same type, or even of different types, or changing perhaps the materials because wood not only is visual but it also has sonic qualities. And I think I have at least a good layman's understanding of manufacturing and marketing. So I try to help the companies make sonic and visual improvements on the models that are not going to involve extensive retooling.

**M&SR:** Was guitar your first instrument?

**Jorgenson:** I started on the piano. My mom was a piano teacher and so everyday I saw kids come over to our house playing the piano. So, like kids do, you see somebody else doing something and you want to do it, especially because I saw my mom paying attention to those kids who were students. I think it's also natural for a kid to want to get the attention of their mom, so I started doing the same. And then, pretty quickly, I realized that I liked it, that it wasn't just some-



Jorgenson with his signature Gitane.

thing to get attention or because everyone else did it. I actually really liked it. It sounds corny, but I liked the sound of music and the different melodies. Then I started on the clarinet. Again, I was kind of copying my sibling. I have an older sister who started playing the flute and I thought, "Well, that's kind of cool. If she's playing another instrument besides the piano then I should be able to do that too." So I chose the clarinet because I liked the sound of it. My mom used to play us a recording of "Peter and the Wolf" and they used different instruments of the orchestra for the different characters. The clarinet was the cat and I kind of liked that sound. I liked the melody.

**M&SR:** What kind of clarinet did you play?

**Jorgenson:** The very first clarinet that I had was just an old one that had been my mom's, actually. A kind of cheap one. You know, it's funny. I've only had four clarinets in my whole life. The first beginner one, and then the second one I had was called a Normandy, which was a student-

model LeBlanc, but a pretty good one, a wooden one. I had a pretty natural aptitude for the clarinet so I got pretty good at a young age and my dad bought me a Buffet clarinet when I was in seventh or eighth grade. He bought it in France and it's a really fine clarinet. I played that until it got stolen in 1984. And then with the insurance money, I went to buy another Buffet but I didn't find one I liked as well as my old one. I ended up getting a Leblanc L27 that I liked a lot. That's the main one I still play today. Oh...I lied. I also bought a Selmer Series 9 off of eBay that I leave in England. So if I need a clarinet in England I play the Selmer.

**M&SR:** Are there any particular retailers you like to go to for your band and orchestra needs?

**Jorgenson:** Baxter-Northrup on Ventura Boulevard [in Sherman Oaks, Calif.] Yeah, that's the last place I shopped for that kind of thing. I travel so much, so often I'll just stop into whatever music shop I'm around all over the coun-

(continued on page 33)

38

## TOY STORE

(continued from page 38)

try and world. There's actually an amazing music shop in Bradford, England. I don't remember the name of it, but they have a lot of vintage saxophones. A big collection of them.

**M&SR:** Do you go to different places for guitars?

**Jorgenson:** Yeah. Usually the one won't specialize in the other. For guitar-type stuff, well, I used to live right near Guitar Center in Hollywood. So I could literally walk there. That was very convenient. And there's also a Guitar Center here in Nashville. If it's a real normal item I'll go there, but if it's kind of a specialty item there's a store in Nashville called Corner Music. It really caters to the professional studio musician. There aren't many stores that do that, really. Most of them are catering to the average semi-pro and student players, but in Nashville there are so many session musicians and their needs are different. Also there are a lot of touring musicians who come out of here, so with

things like cases and pedal boards, there are places here that actually specialize in those items too.

**M&SR:** What do the retailers do that you like and don't like?

**Jorgenson:** You know, I think that the larger stores, for the most part, are kind of confusing and overwhelming. It's impressive to see so many instruments and so many guitars and so many amps. But I think for the average customer, even for me, it's a little overwhelming. And I know for myself, when I go into any type of store, [if I] get overwhelmed, I usually don't buy something. If I'm looking at televisions and there are so many different choices and I don't really know the difference between them, I'll usually end up not buying one and maybe just look online where I can sort of look at things one at a time. So that's one thing. I think a thing that would be good for stores, maybe, is if there's any way to [divide] things in a way where you have your acoustic and

within there you have the acoustic strings and the acoustic accessories, and even the electronic acoustic accessories and amps. I think that kind of helps almost make each different subgenre like a little boutique in its own.

**M&SR:** If you were meeting with an administrator looking to cut music programs from his or her budget, what would you say to them?

**Jorgenson:** It depends what they know already. But the studies have shown so much that kids who get involved with music and playing musical instruments have higher IQs and have better learning skills and do better in school. So that, to me, should be enough to convince any principal or school superintendent to not cut music from their programs. Other than that, I'm really an advocate for all of the arts in school, and for languages. I think our schools need to prepare the kids for a much more international world view, because with the

advent of the Internet and the way the world is going, by the time they're adults it's going to be even more global than it is now. Our economy is going to be drastically influenced by the growth of China and India. We already feel a lot of repercussions from the outsourcing of so many of the jobs. These aren't bad or good, they're just facts. So if we can teach our kids at a young age more international language skills, creative skills, all of those things are going to be really helpful. Music, I think, is one of the very best ways of bridging cultural gaps. I've seen it myself because I'm a white boy who grew up in California and I'm playing gypsy jazz music that was originated in France. And the music that I play has influences of Arabic music and flamenco music and Middle Eastern music; Eastern European gypsy influences. Not that anything I'm doing is special, but putting together those influences and then going out there and playing them, gives a commonality to audiences.