

the MUSIC & SOUND Retailer

**DESPITE
THE UNCERTAINTY
CAUSED BY COVID-19,
PERCUSSION
MANUFACTURERS
SEE A BRIGHT FUTURE**

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BEAT
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MARKET PULSE

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The At-Home Recording Market Has Exploded

How retailers can build lasting relationships
with instructors, houses of worship and more

By Dusty Wakeman, Mojave Audio



In these times of global crisis, when the economic future for many retailers seems uncertain, MI and pro-sound retailers can be sure of at least one thing: The at-home recording market has exploded.

This market has come to include string players rehearsing and performing online; professional session musicians tracking for films; or even my church, which is online every Sunday now with a virtual choir. Even when musicians and songwriters are trapped at home, they continue to make music. It's what they do. And many of these players are recording or performing live from home for the first time, which offers retailers an ideal opportunity to establish a mutual partnership with customers coming into their stores or purchasing from their website — with customers who are no longer “just browsing,” but shopping for a new set of tools that meet their specific professional or hobbyist needs.

Blowing the Roof Off At-Home Recording

At Mojave Audio, our retail partners were already reporting great sales numbers in 2020. But, as soon as the shutdown occurred in March, our sales went through the roof. Meaning that, in the months leading

up to the announcement that we would be replacing our entire line of microphones with multicolor variations of the same products, Mojave sold off of the entire stock of monochromatic microphones, making way for the new stock of multicolor microphones we released in June.

The influx of new customers still includes accomplished engineers, but also professional musicians and hobbyists who may not be well-versed in studio engineering, like singer/songwriters, choirs for churches and houses of worship, music schools, colleges and universities, local/regional municipal orchestras and bands — as well as non-musical recording gigs, like voiceover artists.

For the foreseeable future, at least, any group of musicians that previously gathered in one place to practice, rehearse or perform before the shutdown must now find a way to tailor their home recording setup to their individual needs.

Assessing Each Customer Anew

No matter how experienced a musician is with their instrument, or a singer with their voice, retailers servicing new clientele would do well to keep in mind that

most of the people who will be buying new recording equipment may not be experienced audio engineers. In fact, most won't be.

So, especially when it comes to servicing new customers buying their first microphone, it's important to get to know the customer's experience level, goals and purpose for at home recording, as well as the equipment they already have in their arsenal, or that they might still need. For example, if they're buying a microphone, do they have an interface? What kind of computer are they using? What is the connection speed? Are they using a DAW, like Pro Tools or Ableton? Or are they planning to record everything with GarageBand? Do they have a set of studio monitors, or a good set of monitoring headphones?

Depending on the customer's experience level, they may not always know what they need. Don't oversell. The more retailers can keep these sales focused on the essential tools the customer must have in order to get started for their individual, immediate purposes, the higher the chance of that customer coming back if they decide they'd like to upgrade hardware or software once they've gotten a hang of the basics.

Price Point as a Secondary Consideration

Due to the still uncertain circumstances of the quarantine globally and in the United States., many musicians will consider their purchases for at-home recording equipment to be a long-term investment. With this in mind, professional performers and songwriters, especially, are much less inclined to go for the least-expensive equipment. Instead, they want to spend enough money to get top quality and not have to compromise on their sound. But, of course, they don't want to spend a fortune.

To illustrate with an example from Mojave Audio, our hottest-selling microphone lately has

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been the MA-201fet, which is definitely not our least expensive. But, since there are a lot of pros that are already fans of that microphone, they're comfortable recommending it to people who are asking those pros for advice on what to buy.

The MA-201fet example helps to elucidate some more general considerations retailers can consider when assessing the customer's needs. While people have been buying everything from inexpensive dynamic microphones to vintage microphones, the MA-201fet is right in the middle. It's not a tube mic, so there's no power supply to deal with, which eliminates an additional piece of equipment and the need for extra recording know-how. Also, it's easier to set up and maintain. Plus, FET (field effect transistor) microphones have a wider reach. Voiceover artists and singers really like that, since it's great at bringing things forward in the sound. And, since they're faster than tube mics, you get a little more presence. 

In his 40 years in the music business, Dusty Wakeman has worn a lot of hats: producer, engineer, musician and owner/manager of Los Angeles-based Mad Dog Studios. His work with Dwight Yoakam, Lucinda Williams, Roy Orbison, Jim Lauderdale, Buck Owens and many other artists has helped generate a number of multi-platinum and Grammy-winning records. In 1980, Wakeman founded Mad Dog Studios, which he owned and operated for 28 years. He discovered Royer mics in 2000, caught ribbon fever and picked up a number of Royers for Mad Dog Studios, leading to a close relationship with Royer Labs. Looking for a 'lifestyle change' after 25 years of

constant engineering, producing records and touring, Wakeman joined Mojave Audio in September of 2005. He now serves as president of Mojave Audio and continues to record, mix and perform.



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