

MUSIC INDUSTRY NEWS

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NAMM UPDATE

ALISON RICHTER TALKS TO NAMM PRESIDENT JOE LAMOND ABOUT WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE NAMM SHOWS AND HOW HE SEES THE GLOBAL MI BUSINESS GOING



BUY DIRECT

MUSIC INDUSTRY NEWS SPEAKS TO MI VETERANS ERIC GARLAND AND GABRIEL O'BRIEN AS THEY WEIGH IN ON FENDER'S 'BUY DIRECT' SCHEME AND ASSESS WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE



IN OTHER NEWS...

MUSIC INDUSTRY NEWS' EDITOR-AT-LARGE GARY COOPER CASTS HIS EYE OVER THE STORIES FROM THE MI INDUSTRY THAT YOU MIGHT JUST HAVE MISSED...



FUSION BAGS SEES TRADITIONAL INSTRUMENT SALES BOOM



Leading US trumpeter and composer, Farnell Newton, loves his Fusion bag!

Fusion Bags, the Cleckheaton-based premium instrument bag company, has reported a major boost in sales of its brass and woodwind instrument bags, following its switch to direct-distribution earlier this year.

Previously best known for its high quality guitar and bass bags, Fusion, which had previously been distributed to the trade by Aria UK and then Rosetti, reports that since it took the decision to concentrate on the brass and woodwind sector sales have soared.

Fusion's director of marketing and sales, Nicole Szekeres says: "At the beginning of this year we started to introduce an updated new range for brass and woodwind: the Premium series of cases, which are an update on the F1 series. They are high end products covering price points ranging from £192 to £300. This compares to RRP's of £100 to £150 for the recently released Urban series. Premium series improvements over the F1 series include the use of superior PVC-free material, rain covers, improved back-pack straps, upgraded zip pulls and the all-new Fusion-flow strap system, which means the back-pack straps can be stored away and the case used as a standard carry-case. In total we've released seven new products within the Premium

series. The first response to the bags was a bit reserved but they are now really successful and selling well - not just in the UK but all around Europe, America and recently South America.

"Brass and woodwind is definitely a growing market for us. Trumpet and trombone cases in particular are proving successful. In fact, brass band instrument cases generally are doing better than those for woodwind instruments," Ms Szekeres says. "There is just so much more competition in the guitar market but in the brass and woodwind market there aren't many other companies offering high quality products. Our customers tend to be professional musicians but also from brass bands and that's a growing market for us, too. Since we took charge of our own distribution we've become more able to reach these markets." When asked to expand on how this penetration has been achieved, Ms Szekeres explained, "We've put a lot of energy into internet marketing, for us it's an easier way of making contact with end users, and particularly professional players who are aware of our products but struggle to find stockists."

When asked about the potential conflicts arising from selling simultaneously to retailers and customers

direct, Ms Szekeres responds, "It's not a problem for us. The retailers we work with understand what we're trying to achieve and the quality of the product. Only retailers that don't know the product are the ones that aren't too keen. Our pricing strategy also ensures that retailers are not put off by our direct sales because the products sold on our website are 10 per cent more than a retailer's RRP, so we are not competing with them and we're still actively looking to take on more stockists."

Music Industry News also spoke to John Parkinson, director of brass and woodwind specialists John Packer of Taunton, who concurred with Fusion's claims that the brass sector is proving strong. "We're up," commented Mr Parkinson. "Middle range instruments are selling well, and there is some activity in the specialist end of the ranges." Further agreeing with Ms Szekeres, Mr Parkinson stated, "Trumpets and trombones are doing well, as are cornets. We've seen a steady rise in custom from private individuals seeking aspirational instruments too."

Ms Szekeres added that Fusion hasn't abandoned the guitar market and has new guitar and bass products on the way, but felt that traditional instrument sales had been a neglected area with great potential. **EN**

LONDON'S TOP BRASS

London gained a brand new brass and woodwind superstore as SaxWindBrass.London opened its doors on 26 November. Phill Straker's Sax.co.uk is taking the lead in the ambitious new retail initiative which will see three of the UK's major brass and woodwind companies join forces in the retail venture situated in the heart of the West End.

The new venture is the brainchild of Sax.co.uk's MD Phill Straker, who confirmed that the firm's Denmark Street store is closing, so that it can relocate. Sax.co.uk will be first into the former furniture showroom at 85 Hampstead Road NW1, near Warren Street and Euston Square underground stations, to be followed in January by Phil Parker Brass and All Flutes Plus. The three companies will remain separately owned and run, Mr Straker says, but will be sharing impressive facilities, which will include 11

sound proofed testing booths, a coffee bar, lounge area, practice rooms plus repair and service workshop facilities.

"We've got this one, huge open plan showroom which will be shared by the country's leading flute specialist, trumpet and trombone specialist and sax specialist," Mr Straker told MIN. "It will be a brass and woodwind superstore."

Explaining his decision to quit Sax.co.uk's Denmark St location in the face of development plans, Mr Straker said: "We've been told for the past couple of years by the developers that they really wanted to keep us in Denmark Street but when it actually came to it, the rent on the only property they offered us was over three times what we were paying for the same amount of space. Though they are saying they want to keep the music business there, they'll keep them there as

long as they will pay what they consider to be the market price."

Confirming that sales in the brass and woodwind continue to be holding their own and less susceptible to fashion trends than other sectors, Mr Straker added that London remains a major attraction in itself. "Love him or hate him, Boris has really put London even more on the map. There's a lot of focus internationally on London. In Denmark Street something like 70 per cent of our business was with overseas customers so, bearing that in mind, we've branded it as SaxWindBrass.London which will have a portal website leading to the three individual company websites. We're still three very independent businesses but we see this as a venue, a destination both for students at the Royal College of Music and others as well as overseas visitors." **EN**

THE CHARTS

— RISING —

ACOUSTIC GUITARS AND UKULELES HAVE CONTINUED TO SELL WELL ACROSS THE BOARD, WHILE BRASS AND WOODWIND SALES HAVE RECENTLY SOARED.

— STEADY —

NOT WHOLLY LEFT BEHIND BY THE ACOUSTIC'S ASCENT, ELECTRIC GUITARS HAVE REMAINED STABLE, AS HAVE SMALL, PORTABLE AMPS.

— FALLING —

BIG AMPS HAVE BEEN EXPERIENCING A FALLOW PERIOD.