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## ‘Best In Show’ Highlights Best New Gear at The NAMM Show

ANAHEIM, CALIF. — The best products of The NAMM Show 2012 were on display during “Best In Show,” the breakfast panel discussion on the final day of NAMM.

Six experts shopped the NAMM show floor to find the top gear in four categories. On the morning of Jan. 22 in the Anaheim Hilton Hotel, they discussed their choices in front of 861 NAMM attendees. Categories included:

Best In Show — The best product or service that panelists saw at NAMM  
Company to Watch — An exhibitor with trendsetting products or services  
Gotta Stock It — A product that retailers want to stock right now, if they haven’t already  
Best Accessories and Add-ons — A great product from the small-goods arena

This session’s panelists included:

- Gayle Beacock, co-owner, Beacock Music, Vancouver, Wash.
- Victor Salazar, owner, Vic’s Drum Shop, Chicago
- Stephen Fortner, editor, *Keyboard Magazine*, San Bruno, Calif.
- Tim Pratt, co-owner, Dietze Music, with four locations in Nebraska
- Jonathan Lipp, owner, Full Compass, Madison, Wis.
- Chris Basile, owner, South Jersey Music, Sewell, N.J., and vice president of Independent Music Store Owners

“Even with nearly 1,500 exhibitors, tens of thousands of products and panelists from diverse parts of the country and diverse parts of the industry, there were a few standout companies and products that caught the attention of several of our judges,” said Frank Alkyer, publisher of *DownBeat*, *UpBeat Daily* and *Music Inc.* magazines, as well as the session’s moderator. “That was a dramatic change from most ‘Best In Shows’ and demonstrates the power of a good product or a good idea.”

Here are this year’s selections:

## **Best In Show**

### **The P-Bone plastic trombone (Selected by Gayle Beacock)**

Beacock said what started out as a fun gimmick has turned into a craze. The P-Bone comes in a variety of colors, and it actually plays. School bands are getting them in school colors. Trombonists are trying them with different mouthpieces. With a \$149 MSRP, it’s great fun for brass players.

### **NAMM's B2B Ad Hoc Committee (selected by Gayle Beacock)**

One item selected by Beacock that she didn't have time to discuss during the presentation was NAMM's Tech Committee for "E-Commerce: Getting Started With B2B XML." She stressed this is a real playing-field leveler for small businesses like hers. Check it out at [namm.org/initiatives/b2b](http://namm.org/initiatives/b2b)

### **Ludwig Atlas Hardware (Selected by Victor Salazar)**

Noting Ludwig hasn’t had its own hardware line in a very long time, Salazar said this will be the perfect hardware for drummers looking for a strong American brand name.

### **Line 6 StageScape M20d Smart Mixer and StageSource loudspeaker series (Selected by Stephen Fortner)**

Fortner said Line 6 has rethought how a mixer should operate with one of the most user-friendly and advanced products on the market. When coupled with the StageSource loudspeaker series through the company’s L6 LINK protocol, StageScape offers a complete and scalable P.A. system solution.

### **Mapex MyDentity Drum Builder (Selected by both Tim Pratt and Chris Basile)**

Both judges were blown away by the idea of a complete custom drum set delivered in 30 days at a fraction of the cost of current custom shop kits. MyDentity offers more than 50 wrap finishes, eight hardware colors, two wood selections, four front bass drum heads and more than 35 drum sizes — all of this means more than 500 million possible combinations for customizing a kit.

### **Mackie DL1608 mixer (Selected by Jonathan Lipp)**

Noting that Mackie was born as an innovator in pro audio, Lipp said he hopes the DL1608 mixer is a return to that innovative spirit. The DL1608 combines the power of a full-featured Mackie digital mixer with the iPad as the main user interface.

## Companies to Watch

### **Line 6 (Selected by Gayle Beacock and Stephen Fortner)**

Noting that Line 6 knocked them out with innovative products, these panelists also mentioned that the company created a stage environment in its NAMM booth to demonstrate clearly how such products as the SoundStage M20d Smart Mixer and SoundSource speakers deliver in a real-world environment.

### **Mapex (Selected by Victor Salazar)**

Salazar noted that the MyDentity Drum Builder could change the way custom drums are purchased. The immense varieties of colors, styles and sizes available, plus 30-day delivery, make Mapex a company to watch.

### **Fishman (Selected by Tim Pratt)**

With the introduction of such innovative products as the TriplePlay wireless guitar controller, Pratt said the company has stepped up and expanded its game.

### **Charvel Guitars (Selected by Tim Pratt)**

With strong attention to detail and design, Pratt noted that Charvel has re-emerged as a guitar line for retailers to stock and players to buy.

### **Behringer (Selected by Jonathan Lipp)**

Lipp said Behringer has emerged as a much stronger innovator in pro audio since purchasing high-tech companies Midas and Klark Teknik.

### **Casio (Selected by Chris Basile)**

With Casio's introduction of the XW-P1 and XW-G1 synthesizers, Basile said the company is delivering high-quality, high-tech keyboard products that will sell at retail because they feature incredible price points.

## Gotta Stock It

### **Yamaha THR amplifiers (Selected by Gayle Beacock, Tim Pratt and Jonathan Lipp)**

In a "Best In Show" first, three panelists chose the same product for Gotta Stock It — Yamaha's THR amplifier. Yamaha calls it the first hi-fi stereo unit to feature realistic guitar multieffects and amp modeling. The THR also serves as a guitar-recording interface — that with an MSRP of \$199.

### **Gibraltar Quick Release hi-hat clutch (Selected by Victor Salazar)**

Salazar said after trying out the product several times and in a variety of ways, he believes The Quick Release Clutch will save drummers time and frustration. To release or lock in the patented auto clutch, just pull or push on a metal sleeve.

**Casio XW-P1 and XW-G1 synthesizers (Selected by Stephen Fortner)**

Looking at the instruments from a player's perspective, Fortner said Casio's new synthesizers deliver strong features and quality at an unheard of price point.

**Planet Waves American Stage instrument cables (Selected by Chris Basile)**

Basile said American Stage Cables deliver a real leap in quality, especially with the patented Geo-Tip design, which offer superior fit and connectivity in all jacks.

## **Best Accessories and Add-ons**

**Alfred's Teach Yourself Pro Audio series (Selected by Gayle Beacock)**

Beacock said with all the great technology in the musical products industry, there's a need for strong instructional materials. Enter Alfred's Teach Yourself series for the pro audio arena. The line includes books to learn Pro Tools LE, GarageBand, Sonar, Cubase and more.

**Alfred's Super Mario Bros. and The Legend of Zelda series (Selected by Gayle Beacock)**

In a true tip-of-the-hat to the video gaming industry, Beacock said these two titles are terrific for gamers who are also taking music lessons.

**Todd Sucherman Method & Mechanics II DVD from Hal Leonard (Selected by Victor Salazar)**

Noting that Sucherman's first *Method & Mechanics* DVD was a top-seller at retail for a year and a half, Salazar said he's expecting another boom with the popular drummer's follow-up.

**Ultimate Support Apex keyboard stands and TS-100 series self-elevating speaker stands (Selected by Stephen Fortner)**

Fortner noted that the Apex stands have been improved for better design and stability and include a boom that can be used to hold a mic, a light, or even a laptop or tablet. He said the TS-100 series is great because you can just place a loudspeaker of up to 50 pounds on the stand and raise the speaker easily to the height you want.

**Korg Pitchclip (Selected by Tim Pratt)**

Pratt said these clip-on tuners are inexpensive and come in a variety of colors. He added that customers might buy more than one Pitchclip to represent the colors of their favorite sports teams or just their favorite colors.

**Hal Leonard Cheat Sheets series (Selected by Tim Pratt)**

The series includes *Guitar Cheat Sheets — Acoustic Hits* and *Piano Cheat Sheets — Top Downloads* and more, giving the musician more than just lyrics and chords but less than complete notation.

**K-Array ecodock, distributed by Sennheiser (Selected by Jonathan Lipp)**

Without the help of batteries, plugs or electronics, the ecodock is a small, plastic eco-amplifier for iPhone 4. Ecodock uses the laws of physics to boost the volume of an iPhone 4 or 4S by 10 db.

**OnStage Stands iPad mount**

Basile said the mount is durable, flexible and ideal for the musician using an iPad when playing.

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