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INTERNATIONAL FEATURE



ALRIGHT WE'RE JAMMING

The first Music & Arts Center was located in a small house in Bethesda, Maryland. Since its humble beginning in 1952, the company has considerably expanded its retail footprint and currently has 62 stores throughout the East Coast and Colorado in the USA. The company has recently opened a new prototype store, designed by JGA, that offers everything musical for students, parents and educators, including instruments, sheet music, accessories, lessons and instrument rentals for school bands and orchestras.

The prototype design concept for the 2,500 sq. feet (230 sq. meter) Music & Arts store had to create a setting that could accommodate a variety of merchandise, from instrument and accessories sales and rentals to music lessons. Given the range of merchandise on offer the environment also had to appeal to a diverse clientele ranging from rock-star wannabes to parents and educators.

"Music & Arts becomes the bridge, finding common ground between music teachers and aspiring pre-teen rock stars", says Ken Nisch, Chairman, JGA. "In establishing a physical expression of this common ground, the new prototype creates a cool and highly graphic environment that can inspire its youthful audience's interest and still generate school-focused support."

Featuring this commitment are the series of studios organised around key brass, woodwind and string instrument categories giving each its proper due; with a balancing studio for the 'garage band' segment featuring guitars, percussion and keyboards. The new environment creates selling zones ranging from the showcasing of instruments against a rich, yet flexible, background merchandising system, to the adjacency of accessories and easy accessibility for instrument back-up inventory.

The use of a wide span distribution-style

fixturing system maximises the cubic efficiency and recognises the dramatic inventory swing needs of the company; from the peak back-to-school periods to the balance of the year. Highlighting these areas are large bold graphic panels that display the company's underlying branding message through illustration and graphic style, while supporting a simple wayfinding function for the often unfamiliar first-time customer.

A major focal truss element brings the backstage character to the store, acting as a divider between the more traditional and garage band aspect, which features rock categories such as drums, electric guitars and amplifiers. A large, light coloured wall references the scoring of music and provides a high contrast, simple background to the iconic and often colourful character of guitars themselves.

The practice rooms with full vision glass doors creates a more open and inviting place to rehearse and is accented by a privacy band to minimize the amount of passer-by distraction. It also provides additional opportunities for customers and visitors to get a real sense of the work and learning that is taking place among the aspiring musicians.

Immediately adjacent to this area is a library of print music. The library is consolidated to retain the maximum amount of selection but



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An interactive display allows visitors to sample software and record test music tracks while in the store



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in a more efficient custom retail fixture that recognises the impulse nature of popular sheet music and the deep-stack necessity of the educational learning tools such as books and learning aids. This area has a series of end caps to highlight seasonal and topical sheet music in multi-tiered displays and provides storage and stacks below via pull-out drawers and/or open cubes for the more destination-driven customer. An interactive display allows visitors to sample software and record test music tracks while in the store.

Raw, lacquer finished metal fixturing provides space for accessories and impulse merchandise around the point-of-sale, like teaching awards, travel cases and collectibles and also impulse products related to the lifestyle and musician interest. Fixtures that have the ability to transform themselves into freestanding selling tables relieve the pressure that the main service counter previously experienced. They also allow the service tables to be effectively positioned adjacent to the particular music and instrument category that is being transacted. With this and the mobility of the backstage truss element, it allows the store to significantly reposition itself for its various peak seasons, including holidays and back-to-school.

Studio top storage areas provide additional holding and auxiliary stock, allowing the store to



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be replenished during non-peak sign up without undue expansion of valuable selling space.

High-intensity, energy-efficient lighting brings out the luster, colour and richness of the instruments and highlights the bold and iconic oversized graphics that are a key part of the store's environment.

"The casual and natural finishes in the flooring, fixtures and the open deck ceiling creates a very relaxed atmosphere that contrasts appropriately with the refinement and craftsmanship that is inherent in much of the store's merchandise", says Nisch ●

Client
Music & Arts Centers

Design / Architect
JGA

General Contractor
Greystone Contracting

Mechanical & Electrical Engineers
M-Retail Corporation

Fixtures / Millwork
Victory Display

Lighting Manufacturers
Lighting Management

Floors
Centiva
Designweave

Acoustical Wall Covering
Acoustical Surfaces
Gilford

Graphics/Signage
Rooftop Communications
Victory Display

Upholstery
Sunbrella

Photography
Lazlo Regos Photography