

# The Music Trades

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## Accessories To The **RESCUE!**



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*As featured in the  
June 2009 Music Trades!*

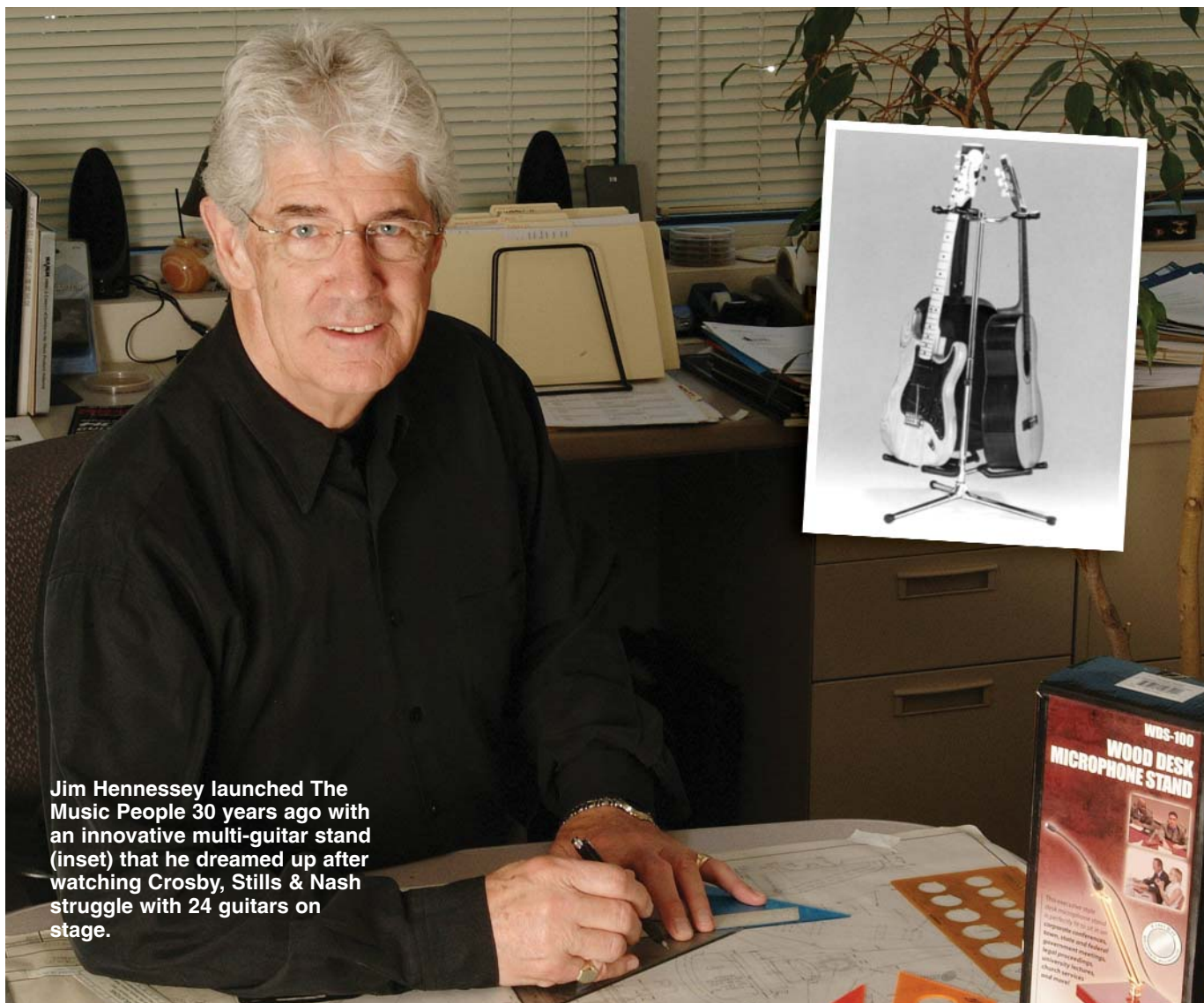
**The Music People, Inc.  
Celebrates 30** *Years*

**A New Way  
To Create  
Piano  
Custom**



**READ IT  
HERE**





Jim Hennessey launched The Music People 30 years ago with an innovative multi-guitar stand (inset) that he dreamed up after watching Crosby, Stills & Nash struggle with 24 guitars on stage.

# Innovative Stands From Music People Drive Retail Profits

Thirty years ago Jim Hennessey launched On-Stage Stands with the first multi-guitar stand. Thanks to innovative product design, creative marketing, and rock-solid service, the company is now an industry leader

THE NUMBERS AFTER THREE decades are impressive. As a distributor, The Music People, Inc., currently offers nearly 120 premium pro audio brands to dealers across the country. As a manufacturer, the company has sold stands and accessories to millions of musicians around the world through its eight proprietary brands including its flagship On-Stage Stands line. Its first products—double and triple guitar stands—changed the way musicians handled their equipment. In addition to innovative product development, The Music People has also been on the cutting edge of merchandising: In 2000, it was the first to bring eye-catching and informative POP packaging to the stand and accessory market.

Celebrating its 30th anniversary, The Music People is a genuine family business success story. Jim Hennessey and

his children Sharon and John have built their business on a solid foundation of basic values, by artfully blending product innovation and customer service, while assembling a capable team.

Long before purple On-Stage Stands boxes graced the floors and shelves of countless stores, future TMP founder Jim Hennessey was hired as a sheet metal draftsman for Kaman Aircraft in Bloomfield, Connecticut. In 1965 Jim was transferred to the company's fledgling Ovation guitar division. His talents drew the attention of Kaman founder Charlie Kaman and he quickly assumed a broad portfolio of product design, marketing, and artist relations functions. He also found himself charged with the task of engineering guitars to meet the needs of '70s top acts including Paul McCartney, Pink Floyd, Loggins & Messina, The Doobie Brothers, and The Rolling Stones. Today his office is still adorned with pictures of these legends, including one Linda McCartney took of Jim and Paul in London. Working closely with artists at Ovation, Hennessey came up

with the initial idea that led to the formation of The Music People. After seeing Crosby, Stills, & Nash struggling to fit 24 guitars on stage, a light bulb went off, and he sketched out a design of a double guitar stand.

With this kernel of knowledge and his metal fabrication skills, Jim targeted an unfilled niche in the industry. In 1979 he left Ovation to build a new company. Within six months, On-Stage Stands was born, offering unique double and triple guitar stands built in Hartford, Connecticut. "The music industry is one where you can start off as a hobbyist," Jim explains. "You love music, or play instruments, and it becomes your passion. And with that passion, it's not too difficult to see yourself starting your own business. That's our story."

September 15, 1979, is the effective birth date of The Music People. Working out of the family's basement, Jim imported tuners, cables, and accessories, while he designed and manufactured stands domestically. Early on, he saw the need to produce his designs at lower costs. A triple guitar stand cost dealers as much as \$55 at the time. Manufacturing moved from



**SUCCESS FORMULA.** Innovative products supplied in packaging that acts as a "silent salesman," coupled with a highly efficient Asian production network, have made On-Stage Stands a top seller around the world.



Hartford, Connecticut, to Japan, then Taiwan, and finally China. The Music People was one of the first U.S. firms to source products with Chinese manufacturers. Those relationships, established 11 years ago, enabled the company to set an industry standard of quality and value.

Artist relations also provided the inspiration for expansion at The Music People. Visiting Jim Croce at a New York City recording studio, Jim recalls, "I walked in and saw that every instrument had a big microphone in front of it. I thought to myself that this is a business to get into." In 1985 he secured distribution for Shure's top selling microphones. From there, TMP secured distribution for virtually all major microphone lines, becoming the industry's only "one-stop shop" for mics.

Based on the success of distributing microphones and at the urging of many TMP employees, Jim expanded the distribution business to include a full range of pro audio gear. "When audio was fairly new," he explains, "manufacturers wanted to

deal with dealers directly; they wanted that contact. But as the industry grew, there were too many people to deal with and distributors were welcomed. There was an opportunity for us to go to these companies that did not have a distributor program and sell the concept." The result is long-standing relationships with nearly 120 of the industry's top-shelf pro audio lines. In 2006, after nearly two decades of distributing and supporting pro audio, The Music People, Inc., enhanced its market presence, establishing a distinct pro audio division with a new, more appropriate name: TMP Pro Distribution.

The TMP Pro Advantage is based around the convenience and efficiency of a single source for 120 brands, expert system design support, simplified logistics, and customer service. Since the summer of 2008, TMP Pro Distribution has published and distributed two pro audio catalogs and expanded its sales and support teams with new employees, all of whom have pedigrees in audio reinforcement and contracting.

From the Hennessey basement, The Music People has moved and expanded several times. Today, at the company's headquarters in Bristol, Connecticut, more than 40 employees

work to develop new products and packaging, provide sales and support, and manage a large inventory of accessories and audio gear. Jim attributes much of the company's success to the

contributions of longtime employees like Purchasing/Import Manager Bob Murray, Controller John Gutowski, and National Sales Manager Dave Renz. TMP is very much a family business.

Jim's two youngest children, John and Sharon, started with the company working in their basement, stamping "Batteries Not Included" on boxes of imported tuners. Today, Sharon is vice president of sales. John is vice president of operations. However, both earned their way up the "corporate ladder" with years of hard work in the field.

In 1992, fresh out of college, Sharon Hennessey moved west where she successfully established the current California warehouse and built a highly effective sales group. She remains in close touch with customers around the world. This is in part because the company has made customer service a top priority—but also because customers are an invaluable source of new product ideas. "Who are the most talented people in the industry?" asks Sharon. "They are the buyers at every music store." For example, when designing a new keyboard product, the company accesses the experience of a longtime salesman at one of its trusted dealers. "You go to people you know," says Sharon. "We do what Jim did in the '70s. We listen to



**STILL A FAMILY BUSINESS.** John and Sharon Hennessey, who started in the business 30 years ago applying "batteries not included" labels on metronome boxes, now serve as vice president of operations and vice president of sales respectively.

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what our customers need and come back with products based on that. And if customers are part of the process, they are going to buy into it.”

As VP of operations, John Hennessey is in charge of keeping TMP a lean, efficient machine, capable of quickly adapting to changes in the industry and marketplace. A wing at the company’s headquarters houses sophisticated computer aided design that is used not only to



**SOURCE OF INSPIRATION.** Working with top artists in the 70s, like Paul McCartney (above), Jim Hennessey hatched a series of product ideas that launched The Music People.

develop products and packaging but also to coordinate the logistics of moving raw materials and finished products around the world on a timely basis. “These investments in systems give us a competitive advantage,” says John. “They enable us to deliver innovative products at a competitive price, reliably. They are at the heart of our customer service.”

The success of On-Stage Stands is due in no small part to a product line that includes stands for virtually every application. However, since 2000 the company’s innovative packaging has also provided a major competitive advantage. As one of the first to ship stands in eye-catching, informative boxes, On-Stage won accolades from retailers around the world. “Customers wanted as much information as possible about the product,” explains Sharon. “To get our message out, we put every spec we possibly could on the packaging.” The silent-salesperson style of packaging not only

helped generate sales, but it also reduced calls to the company’s customer service department, as specs such as weight capacity, dimensions, and materials were included on the packaging. In 2005 and 2008 TMP was honored for its packaging with Supplier Excellence Awards from *Music Inc.* magazine, as voted upon by dealers.

On-Stage Stands is the oldest and largest brand in the Music People prod-

uct portfolio, with an enviable track record. Jim says it is the top-selling stand in the country and consistently ranks in the “Top Ten” of Amazon.com’s music products. Other important Music People brands include Hot Wires cables, which offers microphone, instrument, and speaker cables. Drum Fire was originally introduced in the 1980s as a percussion synthesizer. Today it has evolved into a broad offering of drum-

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sets and percussion accessories. With the VersaTek and Audio Spectrum brands, Music People offers A/V mounts and microphones. In 2005 On-Stage Sticks was launched, followed by On-Stage Gear in 2007. Collectively, The Music People's brands account for more than 300 SKUs.

Another upward force on the company has been its relationship with OEM partners. TMP has proven its ability to design, manufacture, and package products for the music retail industry again and again. The company's skills and

strong factory relationships have attracted the world's premier brands, and many have turned to TMP to manufacture their stands, accessories, instruments, and electronics. The design, manufacturing, and delivery standards of these companies reach the very highest levels. Because of this, TMP systems are on par with the most successful players in the industry. TMP maintains these standards for all its customers. "Part of the philosophy of the company," says Sharon, "is that the smallest dealer benefits from all those processes that are in place with our

OEMs. The codes and compliance, and the confirmation methods that we have enacted, are vital to meeting the standards of our largest customers, but the dealer in Smalltown, USA benefits from the same professionalism and competitive pricing."

The company is as energized as ever. It is excited by its strong growth and its expanding presence in the market. TMP is motivated by its constant potential and it continues to reinvest in itself, enhancing its manufacturing capabilities and developing new products. The market has changed, both in terms of sourcing and customer expectations, and TMP embraces those changes as opportunities to create additional value for its customers and suppliers. The company knows that its business model and its relationship with manufacturers, dealers, and OEM partners puts it in a strong forward position.

"We are fortunate and grateful for our success," says John. "It wouldn't have been possible without Jim's entrepreneurial spirit and the synergy between our employees, customers, and suppliers since then. We are working even more closely to provide the additional value our customers need during these difficult times. We are as driven as ever and continue to reinvest in our future with projects that will maintain our growth."

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