

Catching a quick break from the action at the Diffusion Audio exhibit upstairs, Andrew Cherna sits down with *Canadian Music Trade* in a quiet-ish corner of the lower level of the Anaheim Convention Center amidst the 2017 NAMM Show. Cherna, Diffusion Audio's owner, admits he's been on the hunt for some hot new game-changers but "can't officially say" whether he's been successful...

The irony is that, minutes before, a visitor in the adjacent Revv Amplification booth pointed at the Two notes Audio Engineering Torpedo Live digital loadbox and speaker simulator and called it "the coolest thing [he'd] seen at the show this year." Cherna appreciates the compliment, though that one is already in his booth; he's after something new.

"We certainly want to grow as a distributor, and that will be a focus for this year," Cherna says; however, he's not looking to take on just any line. "It has to bring something new to the marketplace," he elaborates. "I'm just not interested in 'me too' kinds of products."

Fortunately, he's not the only one looking. At the tail end of 2016, Diffusion Audio welcomed Clint Ward to the team – a longtime friend of Cherna's and veteran of the MI industry, having spent stints with companies including Line 6, Apogee Electronics, and Apple.

"I'm really excited to have him onboard," says Cherna, who explains that Ward's focus will be expanding the company's marketing platforms, increasing sales with major accounts, refocusing Diffusion Audio's current brands to better suit the changing marketplace, and finding new ones that would be complementary to the line card.

As of now, that line card includes the aforementioned Two notes Audio Engineering, which specializes in loadboxes, preamps, and software, and Germany's Sandberg Guitars, best known for its high-end basses though also offering several six-string models.

"As a newer company, we're in a great position to spot new products and technological game-changers and put in the right energy to promote them and find the right partners to bring them to market," says Cherna about the firm's approach to brand adoption – and that's as relevant to its existing lines as it is to

any that may be added in the coming months.

Diffusion Audio distributes across the U.S. and Canada, with reps covering territories throughout both and offices in the Montreal and Nashville areas. The U.S. office is the one that handles artist relations initiatives, and those have been particularly fruitful for their two flagship brands.

"Making the move to Nashville was a logical choice given its central location for distribution and status as Music City, USA," says Cherna. "The town is home to many of the best rock, metal, jazz, Americana, roots, and worship music professionals in addition to the traditional country music base. It's also a great foodie town – one of my favourite perks."

The U.S. office has gone a long way to helping them land and service national dealers like Sweetwater, Sam Ash, and Guitar Center, as well as a cross section of NAMM's Top 100 independents.

"In the last year, there's been a real focus to get Two notes into as many hands as possible," Cherna says, and though the Torpedo series initially found strong footing in the metal market, the product has since been adopted by rock, country, and even folk players, including Manitoba's Joey Landreth of The Bros. Landreth and guitar guru Pete Thorn. Both artists did Torpedo presentations at the Diffusion Audio booth at the 2017 NAMM Show. Now that the industry has taken note, Cherna and company are ready to further the push into the public with the help of their dealer network.

"The most important thing for us is that they're not just clerking the brands, but that they're actually adopting and getting behind them," says Cherna about the makings of a strong retail partnership.

He believes so much in the performance of Two notes and Sandberg products that he says the best way to sell them is to keep them alongside more popular offerings and let consumers properly compare. "There are plenty of fabulous products out there," he says, "and consumers aren't afraid to do their research, but they need to be able to see it and get their hands on it like they can with the big brands."

And Cherna knows the retail environment well. Before his stint with Alesis, which preceded the launch of Diffusion Audio, he'd worked in some



of Montreal's music Meccas like Steve's Music and the since-closed Italmelodie and Richard Audio.

"The dealers that are going to be the most successful challenge and embrace the new paradigms and find solutions within them," he opines, and he and his team at Diffusion are seeking to help them do just that.

Outside of the always-active hunt for new partnerships on both the dealer and supplier sides, the focus at Diffusion Audio for the near future is on marketing and promotion. "We're really going to hone our marketing message and improve some of the resources we offer," Cherna states. "We're looking to create evergreen content that can be used at any time combined with product-specific pushes that communicate the technology and lifestyle of the products, and do it all in a way that creates loyalty for our brands."

As he says, "In this industry, it's all about finding what interests people, because we're competing with everything from Facebook to movies to sports to just going outside."

Fortunately, innovative and one-of-a-kind products make it just that much easier to appeal to current and potential music makers. Diffusion Audio has many, and soon, they'll likely have a few more.

Andrew King is the Editor-in-Chief of *Canadian Music Trade*.

A Platform for International Communities to Connect



The NAMM U Idea center is a hub for retail education led by NAMM members, for NAMM members.

International communities were more present than ever at The 2017 NAMM Show, which featured representation from 125 countries and regions, growing international pavilion areas representing eight country communities, and global media across TV, newspapers, radio, magazines, social media, and other outlets ready to share the latest info with buyers and enthusiasts worldwide.

International registrants turned out in force – a total of 17,964 to be exact – marking a 13 per cent increase over 2016. For multi-national companies, the show provides a central gathering place.

Global Connections

"The NAMM Show gathers our industry as a global community, which in turn drives opportunity," says Joe Lamond, NAMM president and CEO. "This event once again proved to be a stable, reliable platform for growth, both in business and in professional development, as well as in solidarity to share our common vision in creating a world of more music makers."

NAMM could not continue to grow as a global powerhouse without the support of international communities across a variety of music and sound disciplines. The 3 per cent increase in exhibiting companies is a direct reflection of the expanded capabilities, innovations, and new ways in which people – and companies – are making music today. This trend was also demonstrated in new exhibiting brands, which accounted for a growth of 2 per cent over last year.

"It's an international showcase for our products and it sets the bar for the rest of the world," says Stephen Schmidt of Casio. "We have divisions in Brazil, Mexico, Japan, and more, and we all come to the Anaheim show to see the latest."

Michael Skinner of DANSR Inc. agrees: "We are an international company and NAMM allows us the ability to address the needs of our clients and customers in one place, and having the international companies here allows us to meet and have face-to-face conversations under one roof."

Canadian Connections

Canada continues to be the number one international community represented on the show floor with the largest number of exhibiting members and attendees. NAMM is grateful for the collaboration and partnership that a strong Canadian presence provides.

"I came because of everything that NAMM represents – new ideas and innovation," says Eddie Fiore of House of Chords Music Centre in Milton, ON. "It was a recommendation from a lot of the reps I work with and I thought coming here would definitely be a very beneficial thing for our business."

International members discovered benefits in spades throughout the four days through a wide variety of networking events and receptions, nightly concerts from local and global talent, as well as world-class education, presenting the most relevant industry topics to exhibitors and retailers alike.

Strengthening Connections

A strong commitment to future innovation continues to be a draw for international communities as well, where NAMM is the one-stop shop for the latest music and sound products and concepts, including virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and wearable technologies.

For the first time, The 2017 NAMM Show hosted training and certification sessions for the multi-channel, digital networking protocol Dante, which welcomed a capacity crowd. Software.NAMM, a showcase of music apps and technologies created in concert with IMSTA (Internation-

al Music Software Trade Association), returned for its second year and featured top music software and app developers who were on hand to meet with prospective buyers and showcase their latest applications.

As the music and sound industry continues to evolve at a more rapid pace every year, The NAMM Show remains the stable, reliable business platform to gather the musical tribes from around the world, springboard innovation, and equip members for the demands of the future.

Looking to the future, The Summer NAMM Show will return to Nashville's Music City Center from July 13-15. Later in the year, NAMM returns to Moscow for Prolight + Sound Russia from Sept. 12-14 and NAMM Musikmesse Russia from Sept. 14-17.



Crowds gather at the NAMM Nissan Grand Plaza for food, events, and concerts throughout The NAMM Show

The NAMM Show returns to Anaheim from January 25-28, 2018, with the new addition of the Anaheim Convention Center North Hall, providing an expanded NAMM campus and enhanced show experience for all international exhibitors and attendees.

To learn more about the expansion, visit www.namm.org/2018-expansion. To learn more about NAMM Shows and the benefits of membership, visit www.namm.org.

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