

FENDER SUPPORTS CONTINUED GROWTH, APPOINTS KEY LEADERS

ADDS SENIOR LEADERS IN LIFESTYLE, ELECTRICS PRODUCT CATEGORIES, WELCOMES FIRST NEW FENDER CUSTOM SHOP MASTER BUILDERS IN SEVEN YEARS

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. (April 30, 2018) — Fender Musical Instruments Corporation (FMIC) today announced executive positions that will lead electric guitar product development and lifestyle product licensing, as well as the addition of two new master builders to its prestigious Fender Custom Shop. Max Gutnik joins Fender as VP, Fender Electric Guitars and Basses; Dan Heitkemper assumes the new role of VP, Licensing and Merchandising; and both Ron Thorn and Kyle McMillin join the Fender Custom Shop's team of esteemed Master Builders. These appointments come at an opportune time for Fender, which is poised for continued growth.

"Our business and our industry have enjoyed steady growth in recent years, and I'm confident these new leaders and world-class craftsman will continue to fuel growth for years to come," said Andy Mooney, Fender CEO. "Fretted instrument sales remain strong, and the ever-increasing demand for Fender Custom Shop guitars could only be satisfied by hiring some of the greatest luthiers in the business to join our Master Builder team."

Max Gutnik joins Fender as VP, Fender Electric Guitars and Basses with more than 25 years of experience in the music industry. In this role, Gutnik will oversee electric product aspects of the Fender brand, including electric guitars and basses, from Fender's Hollywood, Calif. headquarters. From performing, recording and producing on an independent record label to sales, marketing and product development at some of the most prominent companies in the industry, he brings his unique creative vision, strategic thinking and infectious leadership to Fender. For a biography and headshot of Gutnik, click [here](#).

Dan Heitkemper, formerly VP of eCommerce, now assumes the role of VP, Licensing and Merchandising at Fender's Hollywood, Calif. headquarters. In this new role Heitkemper is

responsible for licensing the Fender brand to various companies, expanding clothing and collectables product offerings to elevate the brand relationship with customers globally. For a biography and headshot of Heitkemper, click [here](#).

Ron Thorn, Fender Custom Shop Principal Master Builder, brings decades of expertise in guitar luthiery, namely inlay work, to the Fender Custom Shop. Thorn's relationship with the Fender Custom Shop team stems from his wildly successful inlay business, Thorn Inlay—which has been the sole inlay provider for the Fender Custom Shop since the mid-90s. He's built more than 800 custom instruments under the name Thorn Guitars, and will now build exclusively for Fender Custom Shop effectively immediately. Thorn is among the first to assume the title Principal Master Builder – one of the highest honors at the Shop and in the guitar building community. For a biography and headshot of Thorn, click [here](#).

"Principal Master Builder is a new title we're introducing to the Fender Custom Shop in 2018," said Mike Lewis, VP of Product Development at Fender Custom Shop. "In addition to making individuals' guitar dreams come true, the Fender Custom Shop Principal Master Builders help lead in all facets of the business—effectively collaborating to set the tone and direction for shop operations and culture."

Kyle McMillin, Fender Custom Shop Master Builder, brings 15 years of musical instrument experience to the Fender Custom Shop. A loyal Fender employee for 15 years, McMillin just finished a five-year apprenticeship under Principal Master Builder Yuriy Shishkov – working on nearly 1,000 guitars with the esteemed builder. McMillin now joins a team of the world's finest guitar builders as a Master Builder at the Fender Custom Shop. For a biography and headshot of McMillin, click [here](#).

For technical specs, additional information on new Fender products and to find a retail partner near you, visit www.fender.com or www.fendercustomshop.com. Join the conversation on social media by following @Fender.

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ABOUT FENDER

Since 1946, Fender has revolutionized music and culture as one of the world's leading musical instrument manufacturers, marketers, and distributors. Fender Musical Instruments Corporation (FMIC)—whose portfolio of owned and licensed brands includes Fender®, Squier®, Gretsch® guitars, Jackson®, EVH®, Charvel®, Bigsby®, and PreSonus® – follows a player-centric approach to crafting the highest-quality instruments and digital experiences across genres. Since 2015, Fender's digital arm has introduced a new ecosystem of products and interactive experiences to accompany players at every stage of their musical journey. This includes innovative apps and learning platforms designed to complement Fender guitars, amplifiers, effects pedals, accessories, and pro-audio gear, and inspire players through an immersive musical experience. FMIC is dedicated to unlocking the power of musical expression for all players, from beginners to history-making legends. In 2026, Fender celebrates 80 years of giving artists “wings to fly,” carrying on the vision of its founder, Leo Fender, and connecting players through a shared love of music.

CONTACT DETAILS

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