



*By Jim Basara - GJD*

We continue to receive more information about what was apparently abysmal security at this month's Musikmesse in Frankfurt. Musikmesse is Europe's premier musical merchandise expo, rivaled only by the two NAMM shows in the U.S. Vendors, who bring merchandise to display at these expos that can be valued into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, rely on show security to protect their merchandise from theft and damage. Music instrument dealers also rely on show security to ensure that only valid attendees are permitted to enter the event, so that their investment to attend the show can be maximized with quality and uninterrupted face time with the various manufacturers.

What is becoming clear is that security at this month's Musikmesse may have been significantly inadequate. Guitar Jam Daily has received a variety of complaints about thefts both at the loading areas and from within the expo itself. Some of the thefts are so brazen that it's difficult to imagine how such acts could have possibly occurred if there were any security present at all.

One of the hardest hit was St. Blues Guitars ( [www.saintblues.com](http://www.saintblues.com) ) and their German distributor. St. Blues reported that they lost a total of 22 guitars, including 5 of their brand new hand-crafted USA Workshop Series guitars, which only recently began to roll out of production. "We are frankly stunned at the total lack of security at the event. It was nothing like NAMM. In addition to the loss of our instruments, including 5 of our new Workshop Series guitars, we have friends who lost amps, guitars, and even a 40" flat screen", said Brian Halley of Saint Blues. "Musikmesse vendors make a significant investment to attend the show and it is terribly disappointing that the event organizers did not take security seriously", continued Halley.

"We were expecting the kind of security you normally see at trade shows, like NAMM, but there was nothing of the sort. We had an artist perform and when they were ready to leave with their instruments, we thought they would have to show ID or a gear pass, but they just walked out. It was quite surprising. MusikMesse is very important to us because our market is largely European, but we can't return next year without a better understanding of how our gear will be protected."

Indeed, Guitar Jam Daily has verified that a surprising number of manufacturers, including some of the biggest names in the industry, suffered theft at the event. While most did not want to be identified, others were willing to talk about their losses. Eastwood guitars had 3 guitars, a

camera, and a variety of guitar tools stolen after the show had ended and the equipment was waiting to be packed up. Still on the show floor, without attendees walking the floor, one would think that the equipment would be fairly safe. "There was no visible overnight security", stated Mike Robinson, of Eastwood Guitars, as he relayed the story about when his instruments were stolen. Mike also witnessed people walking out of the show with equipment and not being questioned about it. "We really have to think about what we do next year."

For reference, security at the NAMM shows has been highly visible and thorough. Identification is checked each time an attendee enters the event to insure that the person entering matches the information on the attendee badge. Additionally, all bags are checked each time an attendee leaves the expo area and equipment can only be removed if a valid hand receipt is presented to security.

In all, we have reports of stolen guitars totaling more than 160 instruments. All of the manufacturers with whom we spoke agreed that security at Musikmesse was much less stringent, as compared to NAMM. It also seems that the large manufacturers, who invested in their own closed exhibit space, fared much better than those who were in the general areas, because they were able to manage security with their own personnel.

The thefts were not limited to exhibitors alone. One attendee who had a backpack stolen reported that during the 30 minutes that it took to make a written report about the theft, 13 more people came in and reported something stolen.

Certainly, security procedures at Musikmesse need to be reviewed prior to next year's show. At press time, the organizers of Musikmesse had not responded to Guitar Jam Daily's request for comment.

Any manufacturer who had equipment stolen during the event is invited to let us know ([jim@guitarjamdaily.com](mailto:jim@guitarjamdaily.com)), as we plan to stay on top of this issue. Also, the German distributor for Saint Blues has released a list of the guitars that were stolen which can be found [here](#). We strongly recommend checking the list before purchasing any St. Blues guitars from a seller who is not an authorized St. Blues dealer.