The **Frontline Innovator Award** is given to a retail store who has shown exceptional inventiveness and ingenuity in their practices during the past year in their interactions with consumers.

**Submission #1**

**D. Tobago Benito / DBS Sounds**

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Thank you for this opportunity. I am self-nominating for the Frontline Innovator Award because of the various methods of creativity I have created and implemented to engage new customers and to keep the current customers engaged. One of the methods in particular is the "Friday Fixx". The Friday Fixx is a live skit performed in my store each Friday at 1:00 p.m. The purpose is to showcase new and gently used vinyl and CDs that came in for the week. It is entertaining, informational and my clients look forward to it each week. I have some customers who literally sit in their cars and watch the Friday Fixx on their cellphone so they can see what is available, get out the car and be here to get a jump on the item before anyone else does. Other customers call right after we go live and request that we put their purchase to the side for pick up later that day and we have customers who live further out in Georgia and in other States who request us to do a mail order. Whatever it is that we need to do to accommodate our customer's, that is what we do. If you ever get an opportunity, follow us on Instagram at dbssoundsatl to see us in action.

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D. Tobago Benito, DBS Sounds/ FAMS Coalition

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I am writing to enthusiastically nominate DBS Sounds for the Retailer Innovative Award. DBS Sounds deserves recognition for the incredible work they have done in the music retail industry. DBS Sounds has been a leader in the music industry for 29 years and has consistently demonstrated creativity, innovation, and dedication. Through their commitment to customer service, they have been able to stay ahead of the curve, offering unique solutions to the challenges that music retailers face. This has set a great example for other retailers and has made a real difference in independent music retail. DBS Sounds has consistently improved their physical space by adding a stage, DJ Booth and much more to create an entertaining fun shopping experience & environment. They continue to use technology to market, service and communicate directly & quickly to their customer base. They have made a concerted effort to remain engaged with their customers engaging with them on social media. DBS Sounds has become known for its Live Social Media post, “The Friday Fix” not only by customers but also by many industry representatives. This has allowed them to stay ahead of the competition and remain a prominent figure in the industry. DBS Sounds has also demonstrated a commitment to their community, participating in local charity events and creating opportunities for independent and up & coming artists. DBS Sounds does not hesitate to share ideas and tips with other retailers. As a result, they have earned the trust and respect of their customers, partners, and peers alike. For these reasons, I believe that DBS Sounds is an ideal candidate for the Retailer Innovative Award and I wholeheartedly recommend that they be considered for the award. They have worked hard to make a positive impact in the music retail industry, and this would be a great way to recognize their efforts.

Additional Materials:

<https://musicbiz.org/wp-content/uploads/gravity_forms/193-35ececea83b397defa1faf2684fff8d1/2023/02/IMG_2932.jpg>

<https://musicbiz.org/wp-content/uploads/gravity_forms/193-35ececea83b397defa1faf2684fff8d1/2023/02/IMG_2929.jpg>

<https://musicbiz.org/wp-content/uploads/gravity_forms/193-35ececea83b397defa1faf2684fff8d1/2023/02/IMG_2928.jpg>

<https://musicbiz.org/wp-content/uploads/gravity_forms/193-35ececea83b397defa1faf2684fff8d1/2023/02/IMG_2933.jpg>

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<https://musicbiz.org/wp-content/uploads/gravity_forms/193-35ececea83b397defa1faf2684fff8d1/2023/02/IMG_2939.jpg>

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Nina Smith, FAMS Coalition

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**Submission #2**

**Harry Crumpler, T-Bones Records & Cafe**

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Being in a small (tertiary) market constantly makes you feel like the underdog. You have to stay guarded and alert of all opportunities - they only recently started to actually knock on our door. Hattiesburg is not the largest market. It is not even the largest market in Mississippi. However, when Harry and his family took over this store, the music business was thriving and changing. Fast forward to five years later, and TBONES is suddenly the only game in town. The only record store in the state for a moment. Harry's foresight and trust in the people around him turned TBONES into a major market store in South Mississippi. Investing in imports, vinyl, and an early believer in branded merchandise creating "walking advertisements," the first twenty years were about improvement and expansion. As I said before, and it is understandable, we just do not see all the opportunities everyone does - so we generate it. With the cafe opening in 2008, then offering lunch and dinner starting in 2009 - its service and consistency became the calling card for hungry people to rediscover their love for music. So, this weird pairing worked. And sure, while it sometimes seem like the record store is being "carried" by the cafe, one side helps the other always. Harry was out recently for some time, but the system he installed made the place run without him. While that may not be the greatest compliment ("We ran it well - while you weren't here,") it cemented all the earlier growth patterns and continuous effort to maintain consistency. That system is his. That may not seem like innovation. However, in order for the Record business to survive, we may not necessarily need to think like retailers - we may need to think more like restauranteurs. Thank you to Harry, we see this (and any adversity for that matter) as an opportunity. Thank you for your consideration and time in this submission.

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Michael Davis, T-BONES

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**Submission #5**

**Park Ave CDs**

sandy@parkavecds.com

I am nominating Park Ave for the front-line innovator award because of how creative they are as a retailer with engaging in their community. They go above and beyond with in-store events creating an experience for the true fans to remember. They are also super involved with community charity efforts and finding ways to give back to the community that supports them. Finally, Sandy's engagement with his fellow CIMS community is also above and beyond; serving on our board and committees and working to raise the boats of his fellow Coalition members.

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Andrea Paschal, Coalition Of Independent Music Stores

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Park Ave CDs finds consistent ways to reach out and support their local community through various events and donations: \*a regular Community Day, where they invited organizations to table at the store \*designating a portion of the sale of signed LPs to specific organizations \*promoting and supporting events outside the store set up by or supporting community non-profits and organizations They do this consistently, supporting approximately 4 or 5 different organizations a month, or one organization through several activations over the course of a month. I've attached just a few recent examples, but this is a yearslong practice on their part.

Additional Materials:

<https://musicbiz.org/wp-content/uploads/gravity_forms/193-35ececea83b397defa1faf2684fff8d1/2023/02/Screenshot-2023-02-24-at-8.31.03-AM.png>

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Carrie Colliton, Record Store Day/Dept of Record Stores

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**Submission #6**

**Gallery of Sound**

nardone@galleryofsound.com

Gallery of Sound is a family-run store based in Wilkes-Barre PA. Joe Nardone, Jr grew up in the store begun by his father, a local musician, and now runs it. Seeing the lack of musical education being offered in public schools, Gallery of Sound opened up a school of music, ROCKOLOGY ACADEMY, as a way to inspire and educate the young people who will become both the store's future customers and possibly the musicians who make the records they sell.

<https://www.discovernepa.com/articles-and-stories/picture-this-rockin-the-county-joe-nardones-rockology-americans/>

<https://www.timesleader.com/news/local/614873/joe-nardone-jr-s-new-rockology-music-academy-welcomes-public-to-open-house>

Additional Materials:

<https://musicbiz.org/wp-content/uploads/gravity_forms/193-35ececea83b397defa1faf2684fff8d1/2023/02/Screenshot-2023-02-24-at-8.48.06-AM.png>

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