



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Guitar Center Announces Return of Legendary *Drum-Off* National Competition

Auditions open May 1 at Guitar Center stores nationwide, where drummers compete for the Hollywood finale and a career-defining prize package

Westlake Village, CA, May 1, 2026 — **Guitar Center** today announced the return of **Drum-Off**, bringing back its national drumming competition in 2026 after nearly a decade. Starting May 1, drummers can step into any of **Guitar Center's** 300 stores nationwide to record and submit an original three-minute on-camera audition video. Every store will feature a premium acoustic drum kit with simple, step-by-step instructions for submission. First launched in 1988, **Drum-Off** ran for 28 years and served as a proving ground for drummers for more than three decades, helping emerging talent gain recognition and advance their careers.

Originally launched in Southern California, **Drum-Off** began as a grassroots, store-led competition where anyone could sign up and step behind the kit. As **Guitar Center** expanded nationally in the early '90s, the program grew with it, evolving into a multi-stage competition that has seen more than 100,000 drummers participate over its lifetime. Along the way, it became a defining platform within the drumming community, featuring some of the most respected names in music as judges, including Travis Barker, Peter Criss, Chad Smith, Taylor Hawkins, and Steve Ferrone. From legendary live moments to career-launching performances, **Drum-Off** has earned its place as one of the premier stages for drummers in the industry. The 2026 competition will continue that legacy with a lineup of high-profile judges, with additional details to be announced.

Drum-Off aligns with **Guitar Center's** Legends Play Here™ brand initiative, bringing together emerging drummers, established players, and industry judges in a competition built around live performance. Past **Drum-Off** competitors include Tony Royster Jr. (Jay-Z, Katy Perry), Cora Coleman-Dunham (Prince, Beyoncé), Thomas Pridgen (The Mars Volta), Glen Sobel (Alice Cooper), and Ilan Rubin (Nine Inch Nails, Foo Fighters). The competition has built its reputation on performance, where technique, creativity, and musicality determine who advances. With more than 300 stores nationwide and long-standing relationships across the music industry, **Guitar Center** brings this competition to life at a scale unmatched in music retail.

"I cannot tell you how often musicians (not just drummers) ask me when we're going to bring back Drum Off," said Gabe Dalporto, CEO of Guitar Center. "It was literally an iconic part of music culture for nearly three decades, shining a spotlight on emerging talent and launching careers. Well - it's back, just bigger and louder."

Drum-Off 2026 begins in **Guitar Center** stores nationwide, where participants visit any of the brand's 300 locations to record and submit an original on-camera audition video using premium



DW acoustic drum kits. Select entries will advance to live district competitions held at 24 **Guitar Center** locations, followed by regional competitions in key markets including Hollywood, Nashville, and New York City. The competition will culminate on August 20, 2026, at the Fonda Theatre in Hollywood, CA, where six finalists will perform in front of a live audience and a panel of legendary judges for the title of **Drum-Off** Champion.

At the national level, the **Drum-Off** Champion will receive \$25,000 in cash, a premium drum kit and cymbal package from participating sponsors, a brand endorsement opportunity, and an electronic drum kit from Roland. The winner will also travel to Drumeo HQ to create original content across Drumeo's platforms.

Additional prizing builds throughout the competition, beginning at the district level. Up to 480 district competitors will receive a commemorative gear and swag bag, with advancing participants earning gear from leading drum and percussion brands including DW, Zildjian, OCPD, Pearl, Roland, Yamaha, Gretsch, Tama, ProMark, Evans, Remo, Sabian, Mapex, Drumeo, Ludwig and Vic Firth.

Drum-Off 2026 marks the return of one of **Guitar Center's** longest-running programs, reinforcing its commitment to supporting musicians at every stage. Full details and audition submission information are available at <https://drumoff.guitarcenter.com>.

About

Guitar

Center:

Guitar Center is the leading retailer of musical instruments, lessons, repairs and rentals in the U.S. With more than 300 stores nationwide and one of the top direct sales websites in the industry, Guitar Center has helped people make music for more than 60 years. Guitar Center provides a range of musician-based services, including Guitar Center Lessons for players of all ages and skill levels, GC Repairs, an on-site maintenance and repair service, and GC Rentals, offering easy access to instruments and gear. Guitar Center's family of brands includes Music & Arts, which operates more than 250 stores specializing in band and orchestral instruments for sale and rental, serving teachers, band directors, college professors, parents and students, and Musician's Friend, a leading direct marketer of musical instruments in the United States. Guitar Center Business Solutions is the company's commercial division, delivering professional audio, video, lighting and integrated technology solutions for businesses, institutions and creators nationwide through a portfolio of brands including AVDG (Audio Visual Design Group), GC Pro and Custom House at Guitar Center. The Guitar Center Music Foundation is a national nonprofit that expands access to music through instrument donations and support for communities in need.

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