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Mada Guitars are moulded from pure hemp



[Mada Guitars](#) are a semi-acoustics, built in Austria from hemp pulp. The whole body is moulded from hemp, so it has no internal bracing or support or plastic binders. Confusingly, the 'HempStone' it's made from was developed in Austria but [commercialised in Australia](#). Like most people, my reaction to anything [made from hemp](#) is to run away from the hippies and look for something made from radioactive panda leather, but these look great - I like the soundhole/handle in the top. Pickups are custom made in Germany by [Haeussel](#). They go on sale in June for €2950. For which price, incidentally, you could [buy about 2.5kg of cheap cannabis...](#)

[Posted: 17.5.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[7 comments\]](#)

Handmade USB-powered felt-covered calculator synth



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It's like the whole 2007 zeitgeist rolled into one. Last month, [Kelli Cain and Brian Crabtree](#), who are part of the collective who created the awesome and now-sold-out [Monome](#), ran a four week [workshop](#) in LA called 'Felt Circuits'. They started by making vegetable dyes, then used them to dye wool which was then hand-rubbed into felt. Then they designed, etched and populated noise-making circuit boards which were then put into the felt creatures. Lots of Flickr pics of the process [here](#). Kelli writes: *"Here's the creature I made during the class to show each step... a roughly 8"x 6" calculator. it plugs into the usb port [for power] and makes a bunch of noise when you touch the metal contacts sewn on the bottom."* There are not immediate plans for more Felt+Circuits workshops, although a NYC run could be possible.

[Posted: 16.5.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[2 comments\]](#)

[Ken Parker's \\$30,000 archtop guitar](#)



There's a [great piece in the new New Yorker](#) about guitar design and Ken Parker, who founded [Parker Guitars](#), making carbon fibre guitars in the late '80s with funding from Korg. He sold the company to Washburn in 2003, and is now making Ken Parker Archtops, which are made from wood, carbon, composites and gold leaf. And cost \$30,000. Along the way, we meet:

[The Tonequest Report](#), super high-end guitar mag

[Tom Murphy](#), who's paid by Gibson to 'age' their new custom shop guitars ("To imitate years of belt wear, he held an old buckle against the back and whacked it a few times with a hammer")

[Juha Ruokangas](#), a Finnish guitar maker who makes expensive and ugly guitars using the shinbone of a wild moose as the nut

[This guy](#) who makes guitar parts from fossilised walrus ivory

And finally, the [history of the lute](#).

[Posted: 13.5.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[20 comments\]](#)

[New invention: Tweak your knobs with your feet](#)

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The Third Hand, by [Tone in Progress](#) is a rocker foot pedal attached to an extension tube which connects directly, physically, to a knob on another effect pedal. So any control can be tweaked with the pedal. It's a tiny, delightful bit of mechanical genius for £95. I don't know if you can get longer cables, which could snake up to a modular synth like some kind of steam-powered high-tech pedal steel. I discovered the 3rd Hand on the site of [Jam Guitars](#), a fantastically boutique guitar shop in my home town of Bristol (yes, England).

UPDATE: Looks like it was inspired by the [Electro Harmonix Hot Foot](#), which does pretty much the same thing.

[Posted: 13.5.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[8 comments\]](#)

[Tiny Music: Cologne Airport has a song](#)



[Jon](#) writes: "Did you know that the International Airport at Köln/Bonn has its own completely brilliant tekno-pop song? Go to [their site](#) and click on the 'Music' link at the bottom. [A player pops up](#) and you are away. It gets better as it goes along. Funky guitar at the end. I have no idea who is responsible for it."

I'm not totally taken with the track, but it has an interesting history. It was written by [Plus49](#) - and started out as a five second chime, played 200 times a day at the airport, and heard by 22 million people since 2003. What you can hear on the site is the extended full-length version, which appeared on the album that Plus49 made with the money they got from the airport commission. [Brian Eno et al](#) would be proud of them. (Pic via [Ozan](#))

[Posted: 10.5.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[6 comments\]](#)

[Awesome custom-made pedals in tweed and snakeskin](#)



Apart from one hideous snakeskin superstrat guitar, I love everything that [Basic Audio](#) make - a snakeskin covered wah/filter pedal, a tweed theremin, a ring modulator wrapped in 100 year-old chestnut, and fantastic custom multi-pedal enclosures. They also have a [brilliant range of t-shirts](#) - logos from Hammond, Arp, Sequential Circuits, Echoplex etc. I wonder if they'd make me a tweed MPC? (Thanks, [Tridact](#))

[Posted: 10.5.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[5 comments\]](#)

[In UR modulez upgradin UR filterz](#)



Yes, it's been a while. Thank you to everyone who's sent fantastic stories over the last week, sorry they haven't been posted yet. I've had several dozen suggestions each for: [The monstrously ugly steampunk guitar](#), the [worms making music on a circuit board](#) (circuit bending getting half a million views on YouTube? [This old thing](#) was never so popular) and the [making of the '80s version of the Dr Who Theme music](#). I'm on holiday

this weekend, but sporadic updates will be resuming soon. (Thanks to Mikey for the image. He doesn't think anyone else will get [this joke](#), but I'm pretty sure you will)

[Posted: 3.5.07 by Tom] [[STORY LINK](#)] [[17 comments](#)]

[The most awesome synth demo you will ever see](#)



I've mentioned the [Technos Axcel](#) in the past (super rare '80s super synth with amazing display/interface), but here is one in action, wonderfully demonstrated by a rather [familiar-looking](#) man who appears to have learned English phonetically for the purpose of this demo. Be sure not to miss [Part 2](#) for the 'drawing waveforms with your finger' money shot.

[Posted: 19.4.07 by Tom] [[STORY LINK](#)] [[20 comments](#)]

[A gruesome new coat for your MPC-1000](#)



It used to be that the only way to get yourself a Louis Vuitton custom MPC was a trip to see [Forat](#). But now [MPCstuff.com](#) have a full range of DIY die-cut vinyl 'skins'. They cost around \$42, or for \$70, they'll print a custom skin with your own image. One cool thing

is that they come with labels to match the unofficial '[JJ' operating system](#) - because it totally changes the way the MPC works, the labels printed on the box no longer make much sense. In other JJ news, the mysterious programmer has [reported](#) that the OS memory space is now full - so [discussions](#) have changed from 'we want this new feature' to 'what shall we chuck out to make way for new features?'

[Posted: 19.4.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[8 comments\]](#)

[Damn. Now I need an atomic clock for my 'studio'](#)



It's not often that a [Harmony Central headline](#) makes me think anything but 'Oh'. Then along comes: "[Antelope Audio Launches The Isochrone 10M Affordable Atomic Clocking Device](#)" They go on to say: "*At the heart of the Isochrone 10M is the chemical element rubidium, which thanks to the hyperfine structure of rubidium's energy levels produces a clock that is 100,000 times more stable than crystal oscillators.*" Because, you know, the only thing that's really wrong with my music is that my sample clocking is totally off. Anyway, perhaps [this Wharton clock](#) is a bit more what I'm looking for...

[Posted: 17.4.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[15 comments\]](#)

[Scary man in pierrot costume plays theremin](#)



Here's Californian performance artist [Eliot Fintushel](#) playing Debussy on a theremin. Something about the way it's compressed by YouTube makes him look like a badly-drawn Second Life avatar. Not strange enough? Try [this one](#), with cracker cruffix munching... (Thanks, Mikev)

.....inger (.....).....)

[Posted: 16.4.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[15 comments\]](#)

[Herbie, Quincy, a Fairlight and a nice glass of wine](#)



Aaah, supreme geeks at play...

[Posted: 13.4.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[16 comments\]](#)

[Two days to go on the Vemia vintage gear auction](#)



Dater Forreast's latest Vemia synth auction is about to finish. Good news: He's finally

[Peter Forrest's](#) latest [Vemiasynth auction](#) is about to finish. Good news: he's finally fixed the website, which now works properly and relatively smoothly. Bad news: It's not the biggest Vemia ever, but there 's still more cool things here than in a month of eBay (unless you're in [this category](#), of course). Highlights include a [crazy rackmounted TR-808](#) (euww - blue LEDs), an [EMS VCS3](#) for 'only' £900, a [beautiful Electrocomp sequencer](#), a [rare Technics monosynth](#) and a tonne of [weird bits](#).

[Posted: 12.4.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[6 comments\]](#)

[Starr Labs: Still trying to make MIDI guitars after all these years](#)



1985 called. They want their guitar synth back. What could be more wonderful than [Starr Labs](#), a tiny little company based in San Diego who have been producing weird, semi-one-off guitar MIDI controllers in the long defunkt line of the [Synthaxe](#), and [Stepp DG1](#) for decades? Their Ztar guitars have buttons/keys along the neck, touch sensitive strings you can strum, and a few other buttons and controllers. Most interestingly, the buttons on the neck are polyphonic, so you can play multiple notes on one 'string', which must make for a bit of mental adjustment for most guitarists. Starr Labs just put out a [press release](#) about their new model Z7-S, which looks like a [Steinberger](#) and seems pretty much the same as all the others, including [this](#) previous post. It costs \$1,495. Of course, for \$1,300 less you could buy a [Yamaha EZ-AG](#) teaching guitar, which works in a similar way, and - according to one review - is "easy to wipe clean"...

[Posted: 12.4.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[9 comments\]](#)

[Neodymium pickups look awesome, expensive](#)



Dutch company [Q Tuner](#) make these freaky-looking pickups from perspex, wire and super-strong neodymium magnets. They sell from \$125 for a single coil pickup, to \$290 for a pair of humbuckers, with a four week wait. Be sure to check out the [gallery](#) (they also come with white and black covers, if you don't like the stripy perspex). There's also is a shot of a [humbucker covered in ferrofluid](#), so you can see the magnetic fields.

[Posted: 11.4.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[6 comments\]](#)

[Tiny, blobby, red guitar iPod](#)



This is apparently the upcoming [Line6 Pocket Pod](#) - a little tiny PodXT for headphone practice (and perhaps gigs?). Price [seems to be](#) \$129, which compares well with the Korg PX4D at \$169. Has a limited number of knobs, but you can deep edit the sounds over USB.

[Posted: 11.4.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[5 comments\]](#)

[Aluminium guitars, carved by computer](#)





[Dave in Alaska](#) carves guitars out of blocks of aluminium on a [CNC machine](#). He's only built [four so far](#), but is planning more. He'll also be selling the electronic plans, so you can plug a block of aluminium into your own CNC machine, and it will spit out a guitar body. He's not the only person building guitars from aluminium. There's also [Specimen](#), [Industrial Guitars](#), [Veleno](#), [Zero](#) and most famously [Kramer](#), who made aluminium-necked (and generally out of tune) guitars in the '70s. (Thanks, Jack)

[Posted: 11.4.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[16 comments\]](#)

[Dude plays with broken mixer for three minutes](#)



Can't really argue with this, can you? And who wouldn't want an English-made 'Top Gear' mixer...

UPDATE: The aforementioned Dude (Dan) will be appearing at the [Sonic Picnic](#) in Plymouth (England) on 22-25th June.

[Posted: 5.4.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[44 comments\]](#)

You'd think they'd change the layout of the controls...





... or the colour. On the left, a [Line6 Echo Park](#) pedal. On the right, the new [Behringer Echo Machine](#) pedal. Then again, I suppose Line6 didn't [get the green from nowhere](#). Previously, Behringer were [sued by Boss](#). They changed the cosmetic design of the pedals and the lawsuit went away.

[Posted: 1.4.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[22 comments\]](#)

[Now you can connect a television to your modular synth](#)



If you are [building a gnarly Behringer-based modular synth](#), you might want to add a few of MFB's new [range of modules](#) - a drum sequencer for €169, a triple DCO oscillator for €159, a couple of cheap drum modules (€89/€99). By far the most entertaining is the €159 [VD-01](#), which takes any synth sources and outputs a standard RCA video - turning your TV in to an [oscilloscope](#).

[Posted: 31.3.07 by Tom] [\[STORY LINK\]](#) [\[2 comments\]](#)