

## Paris Swing Mandolin: *Unleash the Gypsy Fury*

The Paris Swing Co. mandolin from The Music Link features designs inspired by the pre-War era Gypsy jazz instruments, a time when the versatile use of the mandolin ranged from carrying melody to fiery fast soloing.

The Paris Swing Co. offers three models in either natural or sunburst finish including a D-hole shape, traditional F-hole design and the Oval soundhole Nuages model reviewed here. The mandolin requires

some craftsman assembly: An adjustable rosewood

bridge is left off the instrument out of the box for the option of affixing it permanently or leaving a floating bridge style.

The mandolin allows a brighter tone from the smaller oval sound cavity. The solid sitka

spruce top is well contoured to the flamed maple sides and back. This natural model is bound in classic tortoise-shell; the sunburst model comes with a grained ivoroid binding.

A flamed maple neck rises to the ebony peghead keenly accentuated with the Paris Swing logo in white pearl, gold leaf and abalone-style "Tour Eiffel" inlay. The bass side body of the mandolin swirls up to a dramatic curling scroll, and the right angle on the treble side emphasizes its open access for flights of Gypsy wailing.

For playability, this mandolin shines in its class. It bears noting that while this is not a custom-crafted mandolin (at a list price of \$799), the Chinese construction and finish of this instrument pass muster. The body joints are clean and the fretting is smooth without any rough edges or glue marks.

Though pessimistic at first sight of the plastic tuning buttons, I found that the metal string posts allowed smooth and stable movement to bring the strings to pitch. This mandolin held tune nicely.

—John LaMantia

» Ordering info: [themusiclink.net](http://themusiclink.net)

## Hei-D Super Mostro Guitars: *8-String Evolution*

Fingerstyle guitarist Michéle Ramo has dreamed up an eight-string instrument that combines two fretless bass-note strings with a standard nylon six-string format. Built by luthier Rich DiCarlo and inspired by the seven-string guitar work of Bucky Pizzarelli, Ramo's new models includes the Hei-D Super Mostro IV "Sofisticato" and the Hei-D Super Mostro V "Sicily."

Both guitars come with two onboard MIDI preamps (Poly Drive IV by RMC), with one output that sends the first six strings to a guitar amp and another that sends the last two strings to a bass amp. That way, you never have to compromise the bass EQ or volume to accommodate the instrument's high-end, or vice versa.

The guitar bodies are joined to the neck at the 17th fret, with a cutaway at the 22nd fret. The Mostro "Sofisticato" has 22 frets total, giving it a range of five octaves (fretted) plus another octave-and-a-half (fretless) up to high double A. The Mostro "Sicily" has 34 frets and covers the same monstrous range, with six octaves (fretted) plus a half-octave (fretless).

The two bass-note strings are actually thick guitar strings custom-made by La Bella. The seventh string, tuned to a low A, has a gauge



of .070. The eighth, tuned to a low D, has a gauge of .080. Since the bass range is fretless, players can approach the comma system of semitone measurement for more precise intonation.

The Mostro "Sofisticato" features a sitka spruce top, birdseye maple back and sides, padauk neck and ebony binding. The Mostro "Sicily" has a bearclaw sitka spruce top, pau ferro back and sides, padauk neck and Honduran rosewood binding. Both instruments are distinctly appointed and represent an evolution in guitar design.

Mostro guitars can take the place of a full ensemble, providing melody, harmony/chords and fretless walking bass lines all at the same time. When played fingerstyle and used to their full potential, they encourage the creative use of counterpoint and inside voicings.

—Ed Enright

» Ordering info: [8stringguitar.com](http://8stringguitar.com)



## Fender Jazzmaster Ultralight Guitar Amp: *Portable Pro Sound*

Fender's latest jazz guitar amp, the Jazzmaster Ultralight, is a compact 250-watt solid-state beauty that weighs only 7.6 pounds. Combine it with the 16-pound Ultralight 112 speaker enclosure, and you have a versatile and portable pro rig.

The amp head is encased in a rugged aluminum chassis with solid maple side and top panels. The front panel contains a nice selection of controls without overdoing it. There are two inputs, one regular and another with a lower sensitivity for guitars with built-in preamps.

The Jazzmaster Ultralight has a standard two-channel configuration with normal and drive channels available. The normal channel features a "voice" switch, which is essentially a brightness boost, and the drive channel adds a gain control knob for adjusting the amount of distortion.

The back of the head provides a locking connector for attaching the speaker cabinet, as well as 1/4-inch jacks for tuner out and the foot switch. An XLR line out is also available for connecting to a sound system or studio equipment.

The amp sits securely on top of the speaker enclosure using magnetic footing. The cabinet is a perfect match for the head and houses a specially voiced 12-inch Jensen speaker in closed-back design for increased bass response.

As promised, the amp produces a clean and smooth tone using the normal channel. The 12-inch speaker keeps it fat with plenty of bass. The built-in DSP effects include a smorgasbord of choices, and effects can be selected for each channel individually.

Switching to the drive channel produced a range of overdrive tones, from a bluesy tube-like crunch to full-blown distortion. This is especially handy on those jobbing gigs where you play everything from a bossa nova to a rock guitar feature.

This amp is ideal if you are looking to keep your gear light. At a street price of around \$650 for the amp and \$250 for the cabinet, this is not an inexpensive option, but a wise one.

—Keith Baumann

» Ordering info: [fender.com](http://fender.com)