

LATE SPRING 2009 NEWSLETTER

FROM THE U.K.'s LARGEST SUPPLIER OF VIOLIN FAMILY PRODUCTS

1st June 2009

This newsletter is going to be short, as it is too hot currently to sit here keying in a long spiel. Needless to say we have been embarrassed by the amount of price rises that we have necessarily been forced to inflict on you, primarily because of the collapse of the UK £, and partly by the incessant price hikes by manufacturers, German and Austrian string makers in particular, and this has been instrumental in the following:

VERY IMPORTANT WARNING

We have been made aware of a very disturbing fact, and one we were sort of expecting, but hoping wouldn't happen: **FAKE/CLONED STRINGS!!!!** Due to the fact that Strings have become more expensive, it has obviously become cost effective for the fakers to go to the expense of creating the packaging, and getting the strings made, and still be able to make a killing. At the moment it appears that it is confined to Thomastik and Pirastro strings, but as these are the major sellers this is very disturbing. The strings might look like the real thing, they even have the correct silk colours on the ends. On the ones we have seen there is an error, but I have been asked not to identify it in case the fakers amend them. If you are unfortunate enough to buy any of these strings, you will discover they are awful. The 'nylon core' strings like Dominants do not appear to actually be nylon cored. In this country there is only one importer of Thomastik strings, and two for Pirastro. All reputable dealers/shops, even other wholesalers have to buy them from these three importers, including us. Due to these importing restrictions, all dealers will have been affected by the price rises imposed by the manufacturers and the U.K. string importers. Therefore any internet seller selling strings at less than the trade price, as some are, the chances are they are either **FAKED COPIES** or they are selling them at a loss, & I don't believe that anyone would do that!!!!. Please take care, only purchase from dealers you know, and be wary of any internet seller, where of course the Usual Trading Standards **DO NOT APPLY**. Certainly do not buy from overseas sellers, once they have got your money, who is to say what you will get, and if they are not a dedicated violin shop, they will not have anyone on staff who is expert enough to know the difference. It is assumed that these strings are coming from the Far East, but that is at the moment not completely certain. I have to say that we received delivery of a rather superior cello, which the Chinese Manufacturer said was fitted with Pirastro Evah Pirazzi Strings. Whilst they certainly look the part, they most definitely are not genuine. We are taking this up with the manufacturer who is adamant that he was not aware they were fakes, but he said he bought them on the internet, do I believe that, I don't think so, shame the instrument itself is lovely, and now it is graced with a genuine set of Evah Pirazzi's it sounds superb. Please take care, and don't get caught out, if the strings appear to be cheap, they probably are not 'the real thing'

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Unfortunately, whilst we always aim to keep our website prices in line with current prices of the stock in hand, we are sadly hearing of some companies selling on the internet, hiking prices of strings in particular above the prices quoted, when you actually go to the `checkout`. Whilst Printed catalogues could never be expected to keep abreast of the crazy situation we see ourselves in, it seems immoral to me to not supply in line with web prices, which are relatively easy to amend. We are often asked when we intend formally re-issuing our mail Order Catalogue, and I regret to say, not for a while, certainly not until we can see some end to the price fluctuations. We have been advising for some time, that to re-issue our catalogue until there is some economic stability would be crazy, regrettably not all companies think like us, so inevitably new printed catalogues now hitting the streets will be incorrect before you even receive them! As always our Updated Draft Catalogue is available to download, and print out if you so wish, and we will of course always try to keep it up to date, and in any case honour any prices listed there.

NOW PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING FOR THE REALLY GOOD NEWS

In order to give you a short respite from part of the string price increases we have worked out some cost saving measures that enable us to pass on a short term price reduction. Whilst the manufacturers are not, in all likelihood going to reduce any prices, we are for a limited period prepared to offer a blanket 15% discount on **ALL** strings, with the exception of **4/4 Violin Thomastik Dominant Medium sets, with an Aluminium E Ball (135 Sets)**, of which we have been able to buy a bulk shipment, enabling us to sell them at:

ONLY £28.50 a set, back to 2008 prices!! R.R.P. is £43.49 so this really is a bargain I doubt that we will be able to repeat this purchase, so when they are gone, they are gone!

The Dominant offer regrettably cannot apply to variants (ie soft/hard tension, Silver D, or Steel E, or loop end E). Regrettably we cannot offer any further discounts on these offers, as the 15% discount now offered, reduces the strings to near cost price, and we really do need to make some profit, albeit small. Of course also buying from us, you know that these strings are the genuine article!

To obtain this discount, please quote `SUMMER 2009 OFFER` when ordering

Anyway back to the Newsletter, our Instrument sales are still very good, which shows that the quality of our instruments are amongst the best and the number of repeat orders from Teachers and Schools reinforces it. As we still have around 700 instruments in stock, many of these are at pre-increase prices, take advantage and come and see us! Our quality instruments are on a par with the best violin shops, we just don't charge their prices, so what we would retail for say £1500, expect others to sell for £2500 +, and of course we never re-label instruments with different labels to imply something different.

Unfortunately the Hidersine Giovanni Instrument has been discontinued by the manufacturer, as they want to concentrate on the higher quality instruments. Our Instrument section has warned of this impending end of the Giovanni for some time, and we are now marketing our own instrument, the Rosselini. Currently we only have the Rosselini in $\frac{3}{4}$ Size, as we still have a few $\frac{1}{2}$ and full size Giovanni's from our last container, and in all honesty I have to say that the Giovanni is better than the Rosselini, although we hope that our comments to the manufacturer will encourage him to improve them in line with our comments. It doesn't mean that the Rosselini isn't good, because it is, it is just the fact that the Giovanni's were a bit special, for the price. We are aware of one of our competitors who has just issued a catalogue promoting the Giovanni, including such errors as it being available in $\frac{1}{4}$ size, with $\frac{1}{8}$ size becoming available in August. I have it from the highest authority in the company that owns the Hidersine brand name, that no such instruments exist, or will ever exist. I leave the rest to you! If you are looking for a crackingly good Student instrument, either $\frac{1}{2}$ or full size, grab one of the Hidersine Giovanni's before they run out. Currently we have 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ size and 8 full size, but when they are gone, that's it, and what's more, they are still only £85 with our basic set-up.

We of course are working hard to absorb some of the currency related price increases. Instruments in stock are priced, based upon the exchange rate on the day of purchase, and careful watch of the rates can sometimes be of assistance. It does however mean that unless the UK £ starts increasing dramatically against the € and the US \$, instruments will inevitably increase in price.

Whilst the lower price outfits tend to sell at the website and Draft Catalogue listed price, as although these instruments are sold `set-up`, the level of set-up is of course realistically and logically not to the same high standards that the better instruments are. We also routinely undertake further `improvements` to selected instruments, and inevitably they will then sell at a price higher than that listed. Every instrument in our

showrooms is clearly labelled with the selling price. We are pleased to say that our prices for 'Improved' instruments are generally lower than our competitors, not because of the amount or quality of work done, but because we keep our overheads down, and pass on this saving to you, our customers. A case in point is that we have had a comment that our Hidersine Veracini is not as cheap as one of our competitors. Well it is too good an instrument for it not to be properly set up and improved, and I am sorry, but I make no apology for wanting the best sound possible from such a lovely instrument. We put about £100 of Luthiers time into each instrument, and I know that the end result warrants that. We will not sell it as a basic set up, it is a criminal waste, and far as I am aware, no other reputable Violin shop is prepared to sell it short either. In fact at £450, I think we are the cheapest company selling a fully set-up Hidersine Veracini. We only use fully trained Luthiers, who we know will undertake the best quality work. All of our Luthiers have also previously worked for top High Street Violin Shops and have a wealth of experience that you cannot buy.

Moving on, we believe that we may again be able to re-start selling the Andreas Bang Tartini rosin, as it appears that the company has been resurrected, watch this space!

We still have some stock of BAM cases, however when they are gone, we don't expect a further shipment for at least 4-6 months

Quality Bow sales for all instruments are also very good, and our stock level, including Carbon Fibre bows is high. As we were aware of the impending collapse of the UK £, (although not the depth of it) we spent a tremendous amount of our 2008 budget on increasing bow stocks, so in the main, our bows are still at pre UK £ collapse prices, and will remain that way until new stocks start filtering in. Our Student Brazilwood violin bows are still only £21, incredibly inexpensive for an Ebony frog bow. We only sell bows made from Brazilwood or Pernambuco, (with the exception of the composite bows of course) and all have genuine hair, not glass fibre. It is therefore of course a good time to consider an upgrade or spare bow. The Bow lists are clearly indicated (and are as accurate as can realistically make them) on this Web Site in the Bow Section. As always, we are happy to send you a selection of bows to try, within your price range (regrettably not student bows). There is NO CHARGE for this service, we even play the outgoing postage by Special Delivery, you just promise to look after them whilst in your charge, and pay the return postage, again by Special Delivery.

We are of course a dedicated Violin shop, we only trade as JPB Music, and don't hide behind other names in an attempt to disguise the fact that some are GENERAL Music shops! The good old General Music shop is usually OK for Guitars & Piano's, but do not expect them to know about the violin family. The adage should be, if you see anything other than violin based products in the store, steer well clear, they are unlikely to have anyone on staff who really has any knowledge or experience, although don't expect them to admit it!! I have to laugh at one General Music shop that 'voices' violins; never heard setting up called that before! Woodwind & brass yes, violin family, well not really. In writing this I am mindful of the fact that we are currently stocking a few sets of guitar strings "shock horror". This is for one reason only, the local music shop in our area recently closed down, and so many people kept coming in asking if we had guitar strings, we have bought in a selection of reasonable priced strings. So if you want a set of guitar strings, well we do have some, but don't ask us anything about them, we are a Violin shop! What is unbelievable is that you can get a reasonable set of Guitar strings for £5, how crazy is that when Violin strings of comparable quality are about £40, and there are 6 strings on most guitars!!!!!!

By the time that this newsletter is posted on the website, we will have stocks of Rotosound Violin, Viola and Cello Strings. We have always stocked their bass strings, as they are almost an industry standard for Jazz and Rockabilly players, but their violin, viola and cello strings were not really promoted. This is going to change, whilst we are not saying that their strings are in the Dominant category, because they aren't, realistically they are more in the Chromecore/Piranito quality, but get this, at around Dogal Prices! What is more, they are British, so not affected by the collapse of the £. It means that you can upgrade your student violin strings without paying a fortune. Prices will be uploaded as soon as the strings arrive, hopefully in the next few days.

Anyway, if you are a new visitor to our website, or maybe on your first foray into the string world, welcome. If you have read this far I guess that you will have seen that this industry like everyone else is not having as easy a life as we would like. It always amazes me when people find out what I do for a living; they think what a quiet refined business I am in. Well refined yes, quiet, definitely not!

To assist players, please remember the many help leaflets in our 'DOWNLOAD' section. They cover a host of subjects from the fitting of new strings, instrument care, sizing etc. In fact some of the more advanced leaflets cover sound posts and set-ups. Whilst these leaflets are not intended to replace an experienced luthier, we have included them so you have an idea of the complexity and skills required. We are also grateful to 'The Sound Post' manufacturers of the Primavera range of instruments, for their permission to include their string 'silk' colour charts, which are great in enabling you to identify what strings you have fitted. Maybe we ought to be the 'Google' of the violin business!

Please enquire for any special offers. No goods offered will be seconds, or in anyway imperfect, but sometimes end of lines, or cases we have purchased as an extra to obtain some additional discount that may be offered with their purchase.

As always we are happy to welcome you to our shop, in particular to select an instrument or bow from our magnificent selection. Due to space limitations we do ask that you make an appointment prior to visiting. This will also ensure that we can devote our time to you and assist you in your selection. Any instrument or bow(s) selected can then be either purchased at the time or taken on approval for a short period. Bows can be returned by post, but not instruments, which must be returned by hand. While we don't open Saturday's, as a matter of course, we can often open by appointment. If a Saturday is the only day you can make, we will try to accommodate you.

Postal and transport costs are as always a problem for all companies offering a mail order service, and with postal charges in particular, seeming to be on the increase it seems every few months, this does present us all with cost increases. As always we try to keep our costs to a minimum, but primarily we do prefer to offer a next day delivery (subject to the carrier not letting us down), so unless you specifically ask for a second class service, we will always use a 1st Class post, or Next day Courier option. Fuel surcharges are already in place from the couriers that we are currently absorbing; however how long this situation will prevail depends on the price of oil I guess. Our suppliers are not being so forgiving, and are passing on all and every increase which impacts on us, and this we are, as they say, 'keeping under advisement'.

We have been asked on a few occasions to take PayPal. We can see no reason why, when we offer secure Credit & Debit card facilities to consider this. Both customer and supplier have a good protection system in place from the card companies and banks. The same does not apply to PayPal, which in any case was only set up by Ebay to assist in their operation. Suppliers only taking PayPal will almost always be individuals, as recognised companies will always be offered Credit/Debit card facilities by the Banks. The other interesting point to consider is that PayPal will only give you an account with either a bank account or credit/debit card registered to them. So if you already have those facilities, use them direct rather than through an intermediary such as PayPal.

Well so much for it being a short newsletter, like Topsy, it just grew! Anyway I hope that you have enjoyed it and found it informative. It contains my perspective of the Violin industry. It is gratifying to state that in all the years that I have been producing these newsletters, I have only ever had one complaint, and that was from one of our competitors angry that they felt I had maybe exposed their operation as not really in line with our aims. As I have never mentioned any company by name, nor would I, strange that the one that I was thinking of complained!!! Also very strange when I have to say that many other Violin shops have rung us up and asked if they can pass them on to their customers. In the main the Violin Industry is a very honourable one, and I am pleased to be a part of it.

The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are mine & mine alone, please don't blame anyone else! No part of this can be copied or reproduced without the authors expressed consent. Well that is the legal bit over!!! Not quite of course we have to end with Errors & Omissions Excepted, however maybe some errors are deliberately there to stimulate you to contact us and give some feedback!

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