

## Musical Instruments

Most shops listed in this section deal in second-hand as well as new equipment. There are many music shops clustered around Denmark Street (see p231 **Streetwise**) and Charing Cross Road.

### All-rounders

#### Barbican Chimes Music Shop

*Silk Street, EC2Y 8DD (7588 9242, [www.chimesmusic.com](http://www.chimesmusic.com)). Barbican tube or Moorgate tube/rail.*

**Open** 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri; 9am-4pm Sat (9am-5pm during term time).

An invaluable resource for Guildhall students and soloists performing at the Barbican, Chimes – at the base of Cromwell Tower, right next to the main entrance of the Barbican – has a large stock of sheet music, manuscript paper, reeds, strings, bows, mouthpieces, classical CDs, books and more. There's also a limited selection of guitars (classical, acoustic, electro-acoustic) and ukes, plus rhythm instruments and novelty children's items. The South Ken branch has more for-hire instruments, while the Academy Chimes, located at the Royal College of Music, stocks printed and examination music, but is a bit more of a tourist museum shop.

**Branches** Academy Chimes Music Shop, Royal Academy of Music, York Gate Building, Marylebone Road, NW1 5HT (7873 7400); Kensington Chimes Music, 9 Harrington Road, SW7 3ES (7589 9054).

#### Chappell of Bond Street

*152-160 Wardour Street, W1F 8YA (7432 4400, [www.chappellofbondstreet.co.uk](http://www.chappellofbondstreet.co.uk)). Oxford Circus or Tottenham Court Road tube. **Open** 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri; 10am-5.30pm Sat.*

It's retained its old name, but in 2006 Chappell moved from Bond Street (its home for nearly 200 years) to this amazing three-storey temple (four, if you include the Lost Loft and its guitar fashion range of pick pockets, straps and tees) in Soho. The shop is the leading Yamaha stockist in the UK, with a great range of digital, acoustic and hybrid pianos, electric and acoustic guitars, brass, woodwind and electronic equipment. Prices start at around £20 for a recorder and head into the stratosphere (around £19,000) for a double bass. The basement houses the store's collection of sheet music is reputedly the largest in Europe, and the shop also supplies music books and backing tracks.

#### Umbrella Music

*Unit 6, Eastgate Business Park, 10 Argall Way, E10 7PG (0845 500 2323, [www.umbrellamusic.co.uk](http://www.umbrellamusic.co.uk)). Leyton tube then 58 or*

*158 bus, or Stratford tube/rail/DLR then 158 bus. **Open** 10am-6pm Mon-Sat.*

The long-established Umbrella Music school has now relocated to the Eastgate Business Park just off Leyton's Lea Bridge Road. It still stocks a very reasonable collection of new electronic keyboards, acoustic and digital pianos, guitars (classical, bass, electric and electro-acoustic), plus plenty of beginners-level brass, woodwind, strings, drums (including the SpongeBob three-piece junior set) and percussion, amplifiers, recorders, ukes and banjos. It also holds studio equipment (mics, stands, PAs and mixing desks, computer soft- and hardware), plenty of sheet music, runs a 'hire and try' scheme, hosts education courses and has an on-site workshop for basic repairs.

### Guitars, banjos & ukuleles

*See also above **Barbican Chimes Music Shop** and **Chappell of Bond Street**, and p230 **Hobgoblin**. Denmark Street is a first port-of-call for guitar shops – see p231 **Streetwise**.*

#### Bass Gallery

*142 Royal College Street, NW1 0TA (7267 5458, [www.thebassgallery.com](http://www.thebassgallery.com)). Camden Town tube or Camden Road rail. **Open** 10.30am-6pm Mon-Sat.*

An alternative to the Denmark Street gang (see p231 **Streetwise**) – and with an ever-growing reputation with the bass space – is north London's Bass Gallery. Opened in 1992, Camden's Bass offers a wide range of new, used and vintage instruments as well as amps and accessories. Staff here pride themselves on their friendly service and expertise and make a point of trying to keep ahead of the curve by road-testing new products before deciding what to stock. There's an in-house workshop where guitars are built that also offers set-ups, repairs and maintenance. The store will also sell your old gear for you.

#### Chandler Guitars

*300-302 Sandycombe Road, Kew, Surrey TW9 3NG (8940 5874, [www.chandlerguitars.co.uk](http://www.chandlerguitars.co.uk)). Kew Gardens tube/rail. **Open** 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat.*

The fact that Chandler Guitars has survived for so long in its remote, sleepy Kew Gardens locale is a testament to the quality of the service and instruments here. The catalogue covers new electric guitars from Paul Reed Smith and Fender, high end acoustics models by Atkin Dreadnought and Breedlove, as well as a superb range of vintage models (acoustic, classical, left-handed). There are plenty of pedals, amps and accessories too and the workshop will sort out any setting up modifications or repairs. Chandler is the servicing workshop of choice when the Red Hot Chili Peppers or Dave Gilmour are in town.

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Duke of Uke

**Duke of Uke** HOT 50

22 Hanbury Street, E1 6QR (7247 7924, [www.dukeofuke.co.uk](http://www.dukeofuke.co.uk)). Aldgate East tube or Liverpool Street tube/rail or Shoreditch High Street rail.

**Open** noon-7pm Tue-Fri; 11am-6pm Sat, Sun.

When eccentric musician Matthew Reynolds decided that London needed a specialist ukulele shop he ploughed his life savings into Duke of Uke. The shop stocks a fair few banjos, guitars, mandolins and harmonicas, but its USP is its baffling range of ukuleles. Artists such as Arcade Fire, Conor Oberst, Patrick Wolf, Beirut, Jeremy Warmsley and Stephin Merritt have all brandished ukes on stage, and the shop has become popular for its jam sessions, with recent visitors including Kitty Daisy & Lewis, Le Volume Courbe, Vincent Vincent and the Villains, the Duke Spirit and, of course, the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain. The website is a useful starting point with details of Duke of Uke workshops, forthcoming events and miscellanea such as a bit of banjo history and the odd photograph and YouTube clip of banjo performances.

**London Guitar Studio/  
El Mundo Flamenco**

62 Duke Street, W1K 6JT (7493 0033, [www.londonguitarstudio.com](http://www.londonguitarstudio.com), [www.elmundoflamenco.co.uk](http://www.elmundoflamenco.co.uk)). Bond Street tube. **Open** 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat; 10am-5pm Sun.

If you're looking for an acoustic guitar, whether classical or flamenco, the London Guitar Studio is the place to come. A wide range of traditionally made instruments by manufacturers such as Alhambra, Goya, Vicente Sanchis and Granados can be found here, along with cases, strings, music, stands and tuners. There's also a decent selection of recordings, books and DVDs to provide inspiration and, perhaps not surprisingly, El Mundo Flamenco can supply the rest of the essential extras – from the shoes (150 nails are tapped into the sole one by one) all the way up to the fans, flowers, castanets and hats.

**Wild Guitars**

393 Archway Road, N6 4ER (8340 7766, [www.wildguitars.com](http://www.wildguitars.com)). Highgate tube. **Open** 10am-7pm Mon-Sat.

Opened in 1996, Wild Guitars specialises in rare, vintage and often bizarre second-hand guitars, amps, effects and echo machines. Dave Wild – owner, ex-guitar- and guitar repair-man – opened his shop with the intention of providing a service for professional musicians, and WG remains a firm favourite with north London's rock aristos (including members of Coldplay, Babyshambles and Pink Floyd). Expect HiWatt, old Vox, Selmer, Gibson, Fender and Epiphones, and but stock moves quickly and new pieces are coming in all the time, so for a full list of what's in stock, take a look at the regularly updated website.

**Pianos & organs****J Reid & Sons**

184 St Ann's Road, N15 5RP (8800 6907, [www.jreidpianos.co.uk](http://www.jreidpianos.co.uk)). Seven Sisters tube or South Tottenham rail. **Open** 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri;

10am-5pm Sat. **No credit cards.**

Britain's largest piano store has been selling pianos since the 1920s and here you'll find brand new Bluthners, Bösendorfers, Kawais and Yamahas; reconditioned Steinways and Bechsteins; shiny new Czech uprights (Petrof, Weinbach, Zeidel, Riga Kloss); and scores of restored second-hand models. Reid also makes its own brand grands and uprights – Reid-Sohn – which are built in Korea. The company runs a busy workshop repairing and restringing pianos, but if you decide your current piano is no longer suitable, Reid will also value, sell or part-exchange your model or another. The shop also offers rentals and hire-to-buy schemes, deducting any hire charges from a subsequent purchase.

**Markson Pianos**

8 Chester Court, Albany Street, NW1 4BU (7935 8682, [www.marksonpianos.com](http://www.marksonpianos.com)). Great Portland Street or Regent's Park tube or C2 bus. **Open** 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat; 10am-4pm Sun.

As well as selling pianos, this family-run business has been providing restoration, polishing and tuning services for over 100 years. Pianos from the British manufacturer Kemble are sold alongside Bechstein's high-end professional uprights and grands. Other brands include Yamaha, Waldstein, Steingraeber, Petrof and Bösendorfer. Designer pieces from makers like Sauter and Pleyel cost well into the thousands, although there are plenty from around £500. The store sells a number of pre-owned models that have been fully examined and set-up, with necessary parts being replaced and any repairs, such as casework damage, being dealt with by their own repairers and polishers.

**Pro audio/electronics****Westend DJ**

10-12 Hanway Street, W1T 1UB (7637 3293, [www.westenddj.com](http://www.westenddj.com)). Tottenham Court Road tube.

**Open** 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat; noon-6pm Sun.

An exhaustive range of cutting-edge DJ and audio-visual equipment and accessories is stocked at Westend DJ. The complete hardware catalogues for all of the leading brands, including Technics and Pioneer, are all available, plus industry names like Stanton, Numark and Denon. As well as the latest turntables, mixers, CD decks, video decks, effects units, amplifiers and speakers, you can pick up headphones, slipmats, styli, microphones, stands, record boxes and a whole lot more. Service is informative and not pushy; and it may well

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be possible to barter for a deal if you're buying a package of several items. It's worth browsing the comprehensive website before you visit.

**Branches** Microworld, 256 Tottenham Court Road, W1T 7RD (7631 1935); Atlantic Electronics Ltd, 970 North Circular Road, NW2 7JR (8208 6988).

## Stringed instruments

### Bridgewood & Neizert

146 Stoke Newington Church Street, N16 0JU (7249 9398, [www.londonviolins.com](http://www.londonviolins.com)). Stoke Newington rail or 73 bus. **Open** 10am-6pm Mon-Fri; 10am-4pm Sat. Having started out as makers of lutes, viols and baroque violins, this respected duo has an impeccable knowledge of the stringed instrument. Bridgewood & Neizert sells violins, violas, cellos and double basses in both modern and classical styles with prices for a modern violin starting at around £200, and rising to the thousands for high-end models. They also stock a wide variety of specialist strings. There are five full-time members of staff to deal with guaranteed repairs and restorations of modern as well as period instruments (including lutes and viola d'amores) and B&N also offers valuations, commission-based sales and part exchange services.

### John & Arthur Beare

30 Queen Anne Street, W1G 8HX (7307 9666, [www.beares.com](http://www.beares.com)). Bond Street tube. **Open** (preferably by appointment) 10am-5pm Mon-Fri. With over 140 years' experience in selling Stradivaris, Guarneris and other Italian masters, J & A Beare's collection of instruments is of the highest calibre. Many of the world's top musicians (Yo-Yo Ma and Isaac Stern included) frequent the place. In 1998, Beare's joined forces with Morris & Smith, London dealers, and together the firm offers expertise and advice in the buying and selling of stringed instruments and bows as well as valuations for insurance purposes. The majority of the violins, violas and cellos are antiques, but there are a few new items. There are experts on hand to appraise and advise on restoration and repair.

## Woodwind, brass & percussion

See also p230 **Hobgoblin**.

### Foote's

10 Golden Square, W1F 9JA (7734 1822, [www.footesmusic.com](http://www.footesmusic.com)). Piccadilly Circus tube. **Open** 9am-6pm Mon-Fri; 10am-6pm Sat. Founded in 1920 by Charles Ernest Foote, this central London store houses a great selection of instruments: maple ply snare drums, Schlagwerk cajons handmade in Germany, a host of World and Latin percussive instruments (ganzas, tambourines, berimbau, pandeiros,



**Hobgoblin.** See p230.

bells, whistles and more), as well as woodwind brass and string instruments. Staff are knowledgeable and passionate about the instruments they play and sell. A decent stock of books, DVDs and CDs covers a wide range of instruments; the online site is useful but a store visit is recommended. There's a rent-to-buy scheme as well as hands-on tuition offered (on request) in an in-store demo room.

### TW Howarth

31-35 Chiltern Street, W1U 7PN (7935 2407, [www.howarth.uk.com](http://www.howarth.uk.com)). Baker Street tube or Marylebone tube/rail. **Open** 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri; 10am-4.30pm Sat.

Britain's leading outlet for woodwind instruments and accessories operates across three separate storefronts selling in clarinets, saxophones, bassoons and oboes. It stocks specialist CDs, accessories and sheet music, and has four full-time staff who look after repairs. Yamaha remains the market leader, but the best saxes and clarinets are French (Selmer, Buffet, LeBlanc), while the best bassoons tend to be German (Gebrüder Mönning, Oscar Adler and the like). The shop also sells second-hand instruments and runs a rental scheme. Over the road (No.34) the Early Music Shop specialises in musical instruments and sheet music from the 18th century, and stocks harps, viols, flutes, baroque cellos, zithers, crumhorns, folk and world instruments.



Jas Musicals

## World, early music & folk

See also p229 **TW Howarth** and p231 **Streetwise** for the **Early Music Shop**.

### Hobgoblin

24 Rathbone Place, W1T 1JA (7323 9040, [www.hobgoblin.com](http://www.hobgoblin.com)). Tottenham Court Road tube. **Open** 10am-6pm Mon-Sat.

The diverse stock at this remarkable folk shop covers a mix of traditional, world and folk instruments covering woodwind (bagpipes, flutes), stringed instruments (fiddles, harps, zithers) and fretted instruments (banjos, mandolins, ukuleles) as well as free reed (melodeons, harmonicas), percussion and guitars. More unusual finds like the Irish bodhrán drum, a double-reed Chinese flute or the Spanish cajon make this shop unique. Vintage and second-hand items are for sale, as are a host of books, CDs and accessories (amps, cases, tuners), and a luthier makes lutes, ouds and guitars and does repairs. The website lists a host of items that have been reduced to clear.

### Jas Musicals

14 Chiltern Street, W1U 7PY (7935 0793, [www.jas-musicals.com](http://www.jas-musicals.com)). Baker Street tube.

**Open** 11am-7pm daily.

Marylebone's Chiltern Street is the central London outpost of the original Southall shop that was opened over 25 years ago by Harjit Singh Shah. His original intention was to apply high-class Western technology to Indian instruments while maintaining traditional standards, and those impressed with the success of this enterprise have included Jimmy Page, Talvin Singh, John McLaughlin, Zakir Hussain and David Gray. As well as stocking tablas, dhols, harmoniums, tanpuris and sitars, the shop offers a repair service and a host of accessories, instrument bags, music and books. Prices are surprisingly inexpensive compared to most Western musician instruments.

**Branch** 124 The Broadway, Southall, Middx, UB1 1QF (8574 2686).

### Ray Man

54 Chalk Farm Road, NW1 8AN (7692 6261, [www.raymaneastermusic.co.uk](http://www.raymaneastermusic.co.uk)). Camden Town or Chalk Farm tube. **Open** 1-5pm Mon; 10.30am-6pm Tue-Sat; 11am-5pm Sun.

A family-run business for over 30 years, Ray Man sells a unique variety of traditional instruments from all over Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South America. More recognisable items like sitars and darbuka drums share the space with Chinese zithers and Indian fiddles. There are also several smaller and more affordable objects such as the Vietnamese frog box and Indian monkey drums, tam tam and nipple gongs, singing bowls, bells, cymbals and shakers. The Vietnamese jaw harps (as heard on Morricone spaghetti western soundtracks) fit nicely into your pocket. Ray Man also runs a service that tracks down specialist overseas instruments.

## Streetwise Denmark Street, WC2

Central London's Tin Pan Alley has been a magnet for musicians and rock stars for decades.

Located between Charing Cross Road and St Giles High Street, virtually every door on Denmark Street leads to a room packed with new or vintage guitars, pedals, amps and accessories. Whether you're seeking a 1930s Gibson acoustic, a £20 ukulele or a neon-green lightning bolt DIME-series Dean electric, no other street offers such variety.

From a 17th-century estate turned 18th-century slum, Denmark Street grew into a row of theatres, instrument shops, music printers and cheap domiciles for musicians, earning it the nickname 'Tin Pan Alley'. During the 1960s, it became a launching pad for the UK rock scene: the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix recorded their first tracks in makeshift basement studios here, the Rolling Stones recorded their debut album at Regent Sound

treasure trove of 1950s and '60s pre-CBS Fender and Gibson electrics, vintage Martin and Guild acoustics and collectable instruments. Also for sale are rare handmade 'boutique' fuzz and effect pedals from LovePedal and Death by Audio. The Sex Pistols lived in the building behind the shop.

A new arrival, at the Charing Cross Road end, is the **Early Music Shop** (no.11, 7632 3960), where you can pay a tenner for a plastic Yamaha soprano recorder and up to £3,500 for a Paetzold sub bass model, moving through handmade wooden recorders by the likes of Blezinger and Mollenhauer. It also stocks harps, baroque cellos, zithers and more.

On the other side of the street, at no.20, **Wunjo** (7379 0737, [www.wunjoguitars.com](http://www.wunjoguitars.com)) houses three rooms of wall-to-wall new and used guitars, ranging



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Studio, and David Bowie – who couldn't afford a flat at the time – lived out of a van here. The late Malcolm McLaren had one of the divier basements.

Today, most of the recording studios have gone, but the remaining guitar shops are still a magnet for rock stars and music fans. Redevelopment of the surrounding area (the nearby cross rail project is underway, while the new St Giles High Street development was nearly finished as this guide went to press) is also likely to increase passing trade, preserving the street's musical heritage.

Starting at the St Giles High Street end, at no.4, is **Regent Sound Studio** (no.4, 7379 6111), Europe's largest Fender dealer, which also stocks Gretsch, Music Man, Squier, Vox, Tokai, Hofner and Danelectro guitars, basses, amps and accessories.

Next door, **Rockers** (no.5, 7240 2610) offers everything from beginner-level to professional thrash-ready new guitars by Fender, Gibson, ESP, Ibanez and Dean. Staff will let you demo your chosen axe with a HIWATT amp and you'll be melting faces in no time. Plug in, and rock out!

Moving on, **Vintage & Rare Guitars** (no.6, 7240 7500, [www.vintageandrareguitars.com](http://www.vintageandrareguitars.com)) is a

from £150 acoustic starter packs and mid-priced Danelectro models to vintage Fender, Gibson, Gretsch, VOX, custom-built electrics, a wide selection of acoustics and a fair range of basses.

Heading back towards St Giles High Street, you'll come to **Bass Cellar** (no.22, 7240 3483), selling standard, fretless, five-, six-, seven-string and lefty models by Fender, Rickenbacker, Warwick and others, as well as a host of bass rigs. Acoustic and classical guitarists, meanwhile, shouldn't miss London's largest Martin dealer, **Hank's**, at no.24 (7379 1139, [www.hanksguitarshop.com](http://www.hanksguitarshop.com)).

After establishing its original Tin Pan Alley shop in 1958, family-owned and -operated **Macari's** (no.25, 3301 5481, [www.macaris.co.uk](http://www.macaris.co.uk)) moved to Charing Cross Road, but reopened a Denmark Street branch in 2009. The shop is the UK's official Gibson and Marshall dealer with guitars and amps starting at £69. The owner's father co-founded Colorsound effects pedals, producing the first English-made 'fuzzbox', used by Jimmy Page on *Led Zeppelin I*.

Finally, **Music Ground Inc** (no.27, 7836 5354, [www.musicground.com](http://www.musicground.com)) is packed to the gills with vintage electric guitars from Gibson, Fender, VOX and National, to 'odd-ball' European brands.