

Expanding Your Game Experience

Some fresh ways to make your mobile arcade even better
BY MOBILE BEAT STAFF

Strats for More Fun Strummin'

In last year's video game-focused issue we introduced



the concept of realistic Guitar Hero/RockBand guitars—solid wood, real hardware, essentially real guitars with game control features rather than six actual strings. Now, you can get a “real” controller six-string for under \$100. If you're willing to expand your horizons, nothing says “classic rock & roll” like the new Rock-Axe guitars by Spectrum Music Instruments (www.ashleyintl.com). In essence, they marry the replicated look and feel of a Fender Stratocaster—perhaps the most famous guitar shape in music—with the functionality of any game-supplied wireless controllers. True to rock & roll form, they also come in black. (In which you can actually see yourself, *Spinal Tap* fans.)

These guitars are very solidly constructed. The real wood of the guitar body gives each one a weight that really feels authentic. The hardware is almost identical to a real guitar—it looks like great pains have been taken to make the game's start/select/and power buttons look like actual guitar knobs. Also welcome is the addition of a control pad that sits lower on the fret board. This allows younger gamers and others with a short “wingspan” to properly and adequately melt faces with the power of their simulated guitar riffs.

Now let's get back to that price we mentioned. These guitars are a true bargain. Paying only \$99 for a fully game-ready, realistic recreation of a guitar, you start to feel like the \$60 the department stores charge for a small-scale plas-

tic “guitar” controller is sort of a rip-off. Especially if you are trying to take your mobile arcade business to the next level, the Rock-Axe guitars will give you a professional look at consumer prices and the added reliability of real guitar parts. If you market yourself well and increase your game bookings, these guitars are sure to pass through A LOT of hands... Better to play it safe and err on the side of rugged functionality. MSRP: \$99 each. www.ashleyintl.com

Taste the Metal-Flavored Warbeast

B.C. Rich, who has been crafting the axes of metal's madmen for

decades, also recently entered the arena of guitar video game controllers. Now, when you play the new Guitar Hero Metallica you can actually feel the bone-crunching riffs with skull-and-crossbone fret inlays and a custom tone control. The new guitars, which are known as Warbeasts, retail for \$79.99 and although they aren't made from real guitar parts, they do have their distinct advantages.

First, the instrument breaks down into three pieces (head, neck, and body), which allows for easy transport. Then, the look of each Warbeast is fully customizable via faceplates that are also available. Next, in place of the bridge, there is a handy “star-power” button that can be

pushed instead of the traditional “bucking” neck to simulate solo mode. Speaking of the neck, the B.C. Rich version also sports the lower “solo” buttons for kids. Also like the Rock-Axe, the Warbeast is available for both PS2 and PS3 and is playable with RockBand, Guitar Hero, and Rock Revolution. MSRP: \$79.99 - www.bcrich.com/warbeastController.asp

A Strong Launching Pad for Dance

The iON Dance Master Dance Dance Revolution pad first caught my attention at the Consumer Electronic Show (CES) this past January. After looking at several other DDR pad manufacturers and doing some research I decided the iON

Dance Master would be the best choice for our company, due to the wear and tear it was going to have to endure. I ordered the pads for review and they were delivered within three days (great customer service!). Due to packing issues we transported them without the required handle being mounted. Once on site we had the handle mounted within five minutes and the full DDR station setup completely done within 15 minutes.

Not surprisingly, the iON Dance website (www.ddrgame.com) indicates that the manufacturer's intent with the iON Dance Master was to develop the best arcade-quality metal dance pad for both exercising and gaming purposes. With our company's mobile arcade setups, we put the unit to a grueling test, heavy usage for long time. These pads are significantly stronger



ar-iON with periods of are significantly others we've used, and the extra weight, while adding to our load, clearly gives the pad better stability. All things considered, although we obviously can't give an actual time span based on a short (but tough!) review period, the longer life span that the manufacturer quotes seems very reasonable.

The iON Dance Master DDR pad truly ROCKS. The kids loved it, the parents loved it but most importantly the committee that hired me loved it. Sure, I could have gone with the least expensive DDR pad on the market but that pad wouldn't have had the impact that one needs to continue to get these events. Also the cheapest pad wouldn't last and would, no doubt, have to be replaced much sooner. The iON Dance Master is built so well I think it could survive a building falling on it during an earthquake.

The key to making mobile video gaming units a successful addition to your service offerings is to guarantee the “wow factor” every time. With these pads, a standard Sony PlayStation unit, a large screen display and some accent lighting, you can strengthen your game arsenal with a setup that looks like it came straight from the arcade. MSRP: \$2609.99, street price around \$1,200. www.ddrgame.com **MB**