

WHAT IS AN "FFD"?



By Gwen Caeli

What is an "FFD"?

'FFD' is the acronym for '**Foreign Factory-made Dulcimer**'. They are mass produced inexpensive dulcimers made on an assembly line overseas (i.e. with cheap foreign labor in "sweatshop"- type conditions) using designs copied from authentic American instruments. If any design can be duplicated, it will be manufactured in another country to sell to the American market – clothing, automobiles, technology equipment, computers, phones, microphones, TV's, furniture, you know the drill. Music instruments are no different. My first "Hawaiian" ukulele was bought for \$2 USD off the side of my ferry boat on the ocean between two islands of the Philippine archipelago, from a small fishing vessel down below – far from Hawaii!

Foreign factory-made dulcimers are a far cry from quality American-made instruments. Much of what you pay at purchase goes toward assessment of import duty fees, U.S. port of entry documentation and surety bonds, carrier's certificates, and other things required through the North American Free Trade Agreement. Some of these imports have received reviews of 'shockingly offensive', 'brace for the worst', 'flimsy', and 'with pitch errors'.

Or, you could just buy local.

Some brands of FFD's that you will find on the Internet, in some local general music stores, big box retailers (WalMart ordered container loads of these, along with guitars and banjos, but did not reorder when their supply was gone) include:

- ❖ **Apple Creek** by Trophy Music - exported out of Romania
- ❖ **First Act** - exported out of China (sold by the container to WalMart)
- ❖ **Johnson Lap Dulcimer** - exported out of China - made from plywood, sold on eBay and Amazon
- ❖ **Roosebeck Dulcimer** by Mid-East Manufacturing - exported out of Pakistan
- ❖ **Saga Pickin' Pak** - exported out of China

5/30/14 - Update on Import/Export Fees Regarding the U.S. Federal Government – Dept. of Fish and Wildlife

Just got a note from Wayne and Robyn Rogers of Gold Tone Instruments in Florida regarding the final outcome of a year-long lawsuit from U.S. and Wildlife Service against Gold Tone. These wonderful small business owners were **fined \$210,000** for not finding two small requirements in a 93-page government import form with a container shipment from China. There were many compliances to be met and, in good faith, they were assured of having met them all. In the end, **fines were reduced to \$100,000!** An unbelievable blow to some good folks helping to keeping our traditional music alive.