



**FENDER CUSTOM SHOP™ AND
ILLUMINATION JOIN FORCES TO
CREATE ONE-OF-A-KIND “FENDER® x
MINIONS: THE RISE OF GRU”
COLLECTION TO SUPPORT FENDER
PLAY FOUNDATION™, MUSIC
EDUCATION IN LOS ANGELES**

**PROCEEDS FROM MASTERBUILT GUITARS, BASS AND UKULELE TO
BENEFIT**

**FENDER PLAY FOUNDATION™ AND LOS ANGELES UNIFIED
ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM STUDENTS**

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. (July 22, 2022) – Fender Custom Shop™ (FCS) and The Fender Play Foundation™ (FPF) today announced the “Fender® x Minions: The Rise of Gru” Collection in collaboration with legendary animation studio Illumination and its recent release of Minions: The Rise of Gru. To continue supporting the Foundation’s efforts to equip, educate and inspire the next generation of players, all proceeds from the sales of the Minions: The

Rise of Gru inspired instruments will support the FPF's music education programs with elementary and middle school students in Los Angeles. With the otherworldly creativity of Illumination designers, Fender Custom Shop Master Builders built one-of-a-kind instruments inspired by the beloved Minions universe and the importance of music to the franchise. Each creation was thoughtfully crafted in a collaborative effort to create stunning, unique, and endearing guitars that will be loved for many years to come. The collection of bespoke, master-built guitars, bass and ukulele are available for purchase globally. [Information on how to buy any model is available on fender.com](#) or by contacting fenderplayfoundation@fender.com.

As part of the partnership, students in the Fender Play Foundation™ programs in Los Angeles receive the opportunity to see the new movie, *Minions: The Rise of Gru*, which tells the origin story of how the world's greatest supervillain first met his iconic Minions. Additionally, students will be learning to play and perform the lead song on the movie's soundtrack, "Turn Up the Sunshine" by Diana Ross, featuring Fender artist, Tame Impala.

"Since we introduced the Fender Play Foundation™, it's been our mission to equip, inspire and educate the next generation of players, supporting their passion for music through our programs," said Aarash Darroodi, President of the Fender Play Foundation. "Our partnership with Illumination® is a special one, as both organizations are committed to expanding the equitable access to music and arts education in after-school programs. For more than two years, the Foundation has been offering virtual music classes for Los Angeles Unified School District students, while Illumination has simultaneously been providing LAUSD students with virtual animation classes through their Animation With Illumination program. By joining forces, we have been able to create truly unique musical instruments inspired by *Minions: The Rise of Gru*, all proceeds of which will help expand access to music education to even more students in Los Angeles."

"We are extremely proud to partner with the Fender Play Foundation to celebrate and support the power of music and movies to move and inspire audiences of all ages," **said Founder and CEO of Illumination Chris Meledandri.** "With a unique combination of Illumination's artistry and Fender's craftsmanship, we are bringing our characters to life with this special collection of instruments that will help drive this mission-critical work. Together,

we are harnessing the power and creativity of our movies and characters to help expand equitable access to music and arts education for all.”

Fender® x Minions: The Rise of Gru Collection includes:

StratoStuart (\$48,000 USD)

Masterbuilt by Kyle McMillin, the custom Minions Stratocaster® guitar is a Dakota Red guitar outfitted with unique fret markers and pearl inlays. This unique creation is made with a roasted alder body, 3A flame maple neck with a “C” back-shape and a 9.5” flat laminated rosewood fingerboard with custom Minions eyes as fret markers. Features include 21 narrow tall (6105) frets, Josefina Campos hand-wound ‘60s Strat® pickups with RW/RP middle, modern strat wiring and controls, a 3-ply white nitro pickguard, American Vintage synchronized tremolo bridge, Fender® American Pro staggered tuning machines, bone nut and wing string tree. The StratoStuart (Stratocaster®) guitar is completed with a reliced finish and unique artwork including custom carved Minion symbols etched into the body, a bite taken out of the sides by “a Minion” and a custom black acid washed distressed denim case with Minions patches and stenciled artwork.

McMillin says of his StratoStuart build, *“The most challenging parts of this build were drawing and engraving the artwork but it was so worth it in the end. Overall, this Stratocaster® [guitar] was so much fun to make and it feels great to know that this project will benefit the children as well!”*

Otto’s Moon Bass (\$50,000 USD)

Masterbuilt by Ron Thorn, the Otto’s Moon Bass, built and piloted by astronaut Otto, features a 7-piece snap-together alder body that can be taken apart and reassembled. Drawing from his machinery design career, Thorn utilized a variety of hardware and custom machined components that allow the pieces to interlock into one another in different stages. Designed by the partners at Illumination, Thorn hand carved Otto, including his goggles, airbrushed the ship, machined and polished the clear cockpit canopy, even making his little denim overalls. The Bass comes equipped with a “C” back-shaped maple neck and 9.5” maple fingerboard decorated with custom-painted Minions graphics. Otto’s Moon Bass comes with 20 frets, a Lace alunitone pickup, single volume control, a 4-saddle ‘70s style Precision Bass® bridge, Fender® ultra light bass tuning machines, a bone nut and ultra bass string tree. Otto’s Moon Bass is delivered in a unique case designed to look like the surface of the moon and lined with galaxy print fabric.

Thorn commented on his Otto's Moon Bass guitar: *"The Illumination team is an incredibly talented group of artists and designers. To say I was blown-away by their initial concepts is an understatement. The fact that they're not guitar designers seemed to liberate their creativity, resulting in instruments that a guitar-designer would never conceive. These instruments are totally unique, fresh and amazing!"*

Kosmic Kevin (\$71,500 USD)

Masterbuilt by Gonzalo Madrigal, this custom acoustic guitar boasts unique features from its carved headstock to colorfully painted soundhole. This one-of-a-kind Kosmic Kevin showcases a laser-engraved sitka spruce top with Minions-themed artwork painted by Madison Roy on its dreadnought-shaped body. This guitar is styled with mahogany back and sides and adorned with a "C" back-shaped neck. It comes with an ebony custom Minions inlaid 12" fingerboard, 20 vintage frets, an ebony bridge and Gotoh SE700 tuners. The Kosmic Kevin guitar includes a custom guitar case with Minions artwork covering and Minions' googly eyes on the surface.

When asked about his Kosmic Kevin creation, Madrigal notes, *"I'm happy knowing I get to help kids enjoy the gift of music by doing what I love to do - building guitars!"*

The King Bob (\$50,000 USD)

Masterbuilt by Dennis Galuszka, the King Bob Minions ukulele features a custom Minions artwork finish painted by freelance artist Sarah Gallenberger, iconic musical instrument visual artist, and comes with a custom black fur gig bag lined with Minions embroidery. The ukulele has a mahogany "C" back-shape neck with a maple top, back and sides body. Additional specs include a rosewood fingerboard decorated with painted graphics, a flat fingerboard radius, 12 mandolin frets, rosewood top load with corian saddle bridge and American standard "shorts" with ebony buttons for tuners.

When building the King Bob, Galuszka said, *"Ukuleles are a rare build in the [Fender] Custom Shop™ so this was a great change of pace! That being said, we have zero tooling and/or specs, so with some reverse engineering from photocopies of the artwork, mockups emerged as a fun challenge. For me, I'm personally very interested in any and all opportunities to help kids build a relationship with the arts. Music saved me as a kid and I can't say I would have ended up in a good place in life without it."*

To support this collaboration, in the latest episode of Fender's serialized content series, Dream Factory, Fender Custom Shop teamed up with Illumination to bring joy, music, and

educational opportunities to young people in Los Angeles through the Fender Play Foundation. Esteemed master builder Dennis Galuszka kicks off as he leads the Fender Play Foundation™ program students on a Q&A tour of the Custom Shop factory. As the students met each master builder, they were simultaneously introduced to the instrument each master conceptualized, helped design and built. Students' first reactions were captured live as they watched a select group of Fender Play instructors and employees play each of the unique instruments. Watch as Momo Wang, designer of the bass from Illumination, presents the bass with Ron Thorn to the program students discussing the intricacies of each model and exploring how the creation of them are a representation of the upcoming film.

The centerpiece of the Fender Play Foundation™ is its music education partnership with Los Angeles Unified, the 2nd largest school district in the U.S., with two key programs. The virtual middle school music enrichment program provides equipment donations, a teacher-led curriculum with access to the Fender Play® app and artist experiences. The elementary school ukulele program, supported and championed by none other than Billie Eilish and her brother, FINNEAS, provides instruments and weekly in-school music instruction at 10 schools in Highland Park. Since launching music education programs in Los Angeles in June 2020, the FPF has placed instruments and Fender Play® subscriptions in the hands of more than 10,000 students.

Illumination was founded with the goal of infusing joy and discovery into every character and putting smiles on the face of every person in their audience, no matter their age or nationality. Aligned with Fender's dedication to unlocking the power of musical expression for all players, from beginners to history-making legends, this partnership is bringing joy, music and educational opportunities to the greater Los Angeles community.

High-resolution lifestyle and product images of the "Fender® x Minions: The Rise of Gru" Collection models and short demo videos of all models in action can be found [HERE](#). "Fender® x Minions: The Rise of Gru" Collection Dream Factory episode [HERE](#).

For technical specs, additional information on new Fender® products and to find a retail partner near you, visit www.fendercustomshop.com. Join the conversation on social media by following @Fender, @FenderPlay and @FenderCustomShop.

ABOUT FENDER CUSTOM SHOP™:

Since 1987, the Fender Custom Shop™ and its esteemed builders have astounded players and collectors worldwide with marvels of creativity, ingenuity and artistry. From its humble Southern California beginnings, the Fender Custom Shop™ has grown to become the world's preeminent maker of highly collectible, custom instruments operating in Corona, Calif. Known as the "Dream Factory," the Fender Custom Shop™ is also home to an honored group known as the Master Builders – some of the most-skilled luthiers in the world – who craft Fender's legendary instruments and push the boundaries of possibility. The distinguished Master Builders make dream guitars a reality for players – from Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, H.E.R. and Jimmy Page to collectors, working professionals and guitar enthusiasts. As the epicenter of innovation at Fender and the pinnacle of the brand, ideas and production techniques devised in the Fender Custom Shop™ for both Masterbuilt and Teambuilt guitars go on to inspire and influence Fender's other production line models.

ABOUT FENDER PLAY FOUNDATION™:

Established in 2019, the Fender Play Foundation™ (FPF) is a 501(c)(3) public charitable organization on a mission to equip, educate and inspire the next generation of players through music. The Fender Play Foundation™ places instruments in the hands of youth who aspire to play and reap the powerful benefits of music education, including enhanced cognitive function, improved creativity and confidence, and better mental health and emotional stability and higher test scores and academic achievement. Operating under the belief that music is a universal language that empowers self-expression and community-building everywhere, the Fender Play Foundation™ prioritizes its music education partnership with Los Angeles Unified (LAUSD), the 2nd largest school district in the U.S., reaching over 10,000 students. FPF's programs are breaking new ground as sustainable, scalable and innovative models for music education.

ABOUT FPF PROGRAMS:

The centerpiece of the Fender Play Foundation™ is its music education partnership with Los Angeles Unified (LAUSD), the 2nd largest school district in the U.S., reaching over 10,000 students. The virtual middle school music enrichment program provides equipment donations, a teacher-led curriculum with access to the Fender Play® app, and artist

experiences. The elementary school ukulele program in partnership with Grammy winners Billie Eilish and FINNEAS provides instruments and weekly in-school music instruction at 10 schools in Highland Park with the goal of creating a robust 3rd-8th grade music pathway for nearly 2,500 students over 3 years.

ABOUT MINIONS: THE RISE OF GRU:

This summer, from the biggest global animated franchise in history, comes the origin story of how the world's greatest supervillain first met his iconic Minions, forged cinema's most despicable crew and faced off against the most unstoppable criminal force ever assembled in *Minions: The Rise of Gru*. Long before he becomes the master of evil, Gru (Oscar® nominee Steve Carell) is just a 12-year-old boy in 1970s suburbia, plotting to take over the world from his basement. It's not going particularly well. When Gru crosses paths with the Minions, including Kevin, Stuart, Bob and Otto—a new Minion sporting braces and a desperate need to please—this unexpected family joins forces. Together, they build their first lair, design their first weapons and strive to execute their first missions.

When the infamous supervillain supergroup, the Vicious 6, oust their leader—legendary martial arts fighter Wild Knuckles (Oscar® winner Alan Arkin)—Gru, their most devoted fanboy, interviews to become their newest member. The Vicious 6 is not impressed by the diminutive, wannabe villain, but then Gru outsmarts (and enrages) them and he suddenly finds himself the mortal enemy of the apex of evil. With Gru on the run, the Minions attempt to master the art of kung fu to help save him and Gru discovers that even bad guys need a little help from their friends.

Featuring more spectacular action than any film in Illumination history and packed with the franchise's signature subversive humor, *Minions: The Rise of Gru* stars a thrilling new cast, including the Vicious 6: Taraji P. Henson as cool and confident leader Belle Bottom, whose chain belt doubles as a lethal disco-ball mace; Jean-Claude Van Damme as the nihilistic Jean Clawed, who's armed (literally) with a giant robotic claw; Lucy Lawless as Nunchuck, whose traditional nun's habit hides her deadly nun-chucks; Dolph Lundgren as Swedish roller-skate champion Svengance, who dispenses his enemies with spin kicks from his spiked skates and Danny Trejo as Stronghold, whose giant iron hands are both a menace to others and a burden to him.

FENDER MEDIA CONTACT:

Christina Stejskal

Vice President, Global Communications

Fender Musical Instruments Corp.

CStejskal@Fender.com

Press@Fender.com

ILLUMINATION MEDIA CONTACT:

Sarah Levinson Rothman

sarah.rothman@ledecompany.com

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ABOUT FENDER

Since 1946, Fender has revolutionized music and culture as one of the world's leading musical instrument manufacturers, marketers, and distributors. Fender Musical Instruments Corporation (FMIC)—whose portfolio of owned and licensed brands includes Fender®, Squier®, Gretsch® guitars, Jackson®, EVH®, Charvel®, Bigsby®, and PreSonus® – follows a player-centric approach to crafting the highest-quality instruments and digital experiences across genres. Since 2015, Fender's digital arm has introduced a new ecosystem of products and interactive experiences to accompany players at every stage of their musical journey. This includes innovative apps and learning platforms designed to complement Fender guitars, amplifiers, effects pedals, accessories, and pro-audio gear, and inspire players through an immersive musical experience. FMIC is dedicated to unlocking the power of musical expression for all players, from beginners to history-making legends. In 2026, Fender celebrates 80 years of giving artists “wings to fly,” carrying on the vision of its founder, Leo Fender, and connecting players through a shared love of music.

CONTACT DETAILS

GLOBAL MEDIA INQUIRIES

Fender Musical Instruments Corporation
press@fender.com

COPY LINK

<https://fender.pr.co/271698-fender-custom-shop-and-illumination-join-forces-to-create-one-of-a-kind-fender-x-minions-the-rise-of-gru-collection-to-support-fender-/>