

Sydney Guitar Stores Closing

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What's going on? So many guitar stores are closing all at the same time. I know that change is inevitable, but why so many in such a short period of time? I remember twenty years ago the strip of guitars shops on Parramatta Road in Annandale. From Billy Hydes/ Allens Music (Closed 2018) at Pyrmont Bridge Rd, Camperdown through Jackson's Rare Guitars (Closed 2013), Gallin's Guitars, (Closed 2018) Guitar Factory, The Bass Shop, a bits and pieces shop for guitar parts whose name escapes me, right up to Norton Street, Leichhardt. I could spend a whole Saturday morning walking between the stores, browsing, playing guitars and having a lot of fun. Gallin's Guitars was my favourite, and I've brought a number of guitars and amps from that store – I always remember the big heavy door. Until recently there were two guitar store left on Parramatta Road, Annandale. Global Vintage, which closed earlier this year and Downtown Music which isn't looking that healthy last time I popped in as they only had a few guitars and mainly empty. (Ed: They have since closed down so have joined the other music shop closures as of March 2026) I brought so many MI Audio foot pedals from Global Vintage and I liked having a look see when up in the vicinity.



Okay some of these stores went into receivership, while others just disappeared. So many good memories. Change, as I said before, is inevitable. But with Global Vintage going, Wild Horse gone a couple of years ago and last April Sunburst Guitars also had its owner Doug disappears, some say retiring. Jocelin and I popped down there last April during the week only to find it closed, but with all the stock still inside. It seems like all the smaller stores are going the way of the dodo. That's why it was so good to visit Gosford Music last holidays as it was like the old days of good service and great products. Not the same style of guitars in every store.

So, why have all the guitar stores recently disappeared? There are a plethora of reasons some of which I've suggested below:

- Competition from online stores. You don't have to travel, and the guitar is delivered to you usually cheaper as many store don't have the big costs involved in maintaining a physical store. The disadvantage is you can't try the guitar before you buy and its hard to return. One advantage is that there are quite a number of different guitars worldwide that just aren't available in Australia that can be ordered online.
- Competition from bigger stores. I've heard a lot of smaller store complain about Manny's Music as they seem to be cornering the market. They can offer attractive prices as they have bigger buying power. However, they have a set range of brands. When they took over Big Sound Music in Crow's Nest they stopped the import of Reverend Guitars which are brilliant.
- Changing musical tastes: The young aren't into the guitar as much anymore. They prefer computer driven music with no feel so will be most affected by AI. Things change over time, but I'd rather someone play something with a feel, and I don't care what instrument they use!
- Retiring owners: Most of the guitar store were open and run by Baby Boomers and that generation has moved on. I think that is what has happened with Doug, but he was an ex-hippie anyway. I think Wild Hose went this way as well.
- Owners passing: The same as retiring owners, but these guys are retiring from life. What happens when an owner leaves this world. Rob of Guitar Lounge had an extreme passion for guitars, so if that store stays open it'll depend on the new owner and staff as to its future. *Ed: Guitar Lounge is still going strong as of March 2026*
- The live music scene is dead in Sydney. Sure, there are great venues like Lazybone's Lounge, the Camel Lounge, Gasoline Pony, the MoshPit, etc. However, the days of walking past pubs knowing that there'll be at least three bands playing are the glory days of the past – and thank God some of us lived through those days. If you go to Adelaide, or Melbourne, who have thriving music scenes you'll find they have thriving music stores as well.



Sydney still has music stores like Manny's Music, Gladesville Music, Parramatta Guitar Factory, Turrumurra Music, Guitar Lounge, etc, but so many local ones close to the CBD have evaporated. So, you might say, what's that matter to us songwriters? Well, the main first instrument that songwriters use to start creating songs are guitars and if they aren't readily available so what happens? "Oh, I can do that on my computer! I pinch samples from other people and make a musical collage. This leads to me prancing around open mic nights singing to me pressing buttons, no skills needed." Yeap, I've witnessed this a lot recently in open mic night. Possibly one of the reasons Staves' Open Mic closed? The young who filled up the place listening to this music don't drink much unlike us old rockers.

Who knows the future? Maybe another prospective guitar shop owner is putting down a deposit nearby and will open up next week with an amazing array of guitars. I'd brought many guitars from Doug at Sunburst Music in Coogee as he had a wide range of different types. I'd recommend that to any new store owner, don't get what Manny's has, go for something different as that is what the punters are looking for. I like Gosford Music as it wasn't the same ol' same ol' which made it intriguing. Something, I also used to like about the old Guitar Lounge store. Once again, who knows the future.

