



# Plastic Soprano Recorder Survey for Consumers



**By Wayne Hankin**

This article helps consumers- beginners, teachers, amateurs or professionals- choose the right plastic soprano recorder.

Over 43 brands were tested over a two year period.

## THE SURVEY

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### Why a Survey?

A through survey of this range has never been executed, so it was time to test the major instruments available to the public. Times have changed and not for the better.

Once upon a time a music store salespeople could put several instruments on a table for the customer to try. Not anymore. It's probably unlikely a dealer will put several plastic sopranos out for you to sample. In many cases it is take it or leave it. Buying a recorder is almost similar to buying a toothbrush.

### Integrity

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How do you know if our recommendations were pre-determined? Our survey was first shown to dealers and manufacturers before debuting to the general public in order to make sure we had information like model numbers and prices correct. Since this survey was completed, some of the dealers and manufacturers have invited me to endorse or recommend their product line. I would like to say no company has influenced me to change or alter the results you have before you.

Here's how I base an approval. Let's say if a company comes to me and say we'll pay you to endorse our product line, it would have to meet the following:

- It has to play in tune
- It has to be easy to play
- It has to feel good in the hands
- And most importantly, it has to sound nice

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If their instrument does that, I'm glad to come onboard. However if any one of those priorities aren't met, I won't endorse because I don't want my name on an instrument that's not up to my standards, or yours. I'm not doing you any favors plugging something you'll find on your garage sale table 3 years from now.

Exceptions are to open to companies that wish to improve their product lines and I'm more than glad to help them. Most companies want to make models that produce good results so I'm here to help, The survey shows where some companies need to improve and where they stand compared to their competitors.

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### Our UTube Video

This article is a supplement to the UTube video, *Plastic Soprano Recorders, Top Picks*, a 22 minute video that reviews all instruments done in our survey.

The video covers three sections:

- Commentary
- Performances
- Information

**Commentary** provides history, testing procedure, and observations on subjects like plastic verses wood for example. The second section are 4 **performances** with instruments that made the top category. The third section covers **information** including a list of dealers and a rundown of the top picks.

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### Recording

No tricks, no audio effects or sound enhancing, just the flat truth.

Our performance section records all instruments flat. That means, we don't eq, add compression, echo or reverb. Besides any engineer can't control the speakers you buy. So as a service to you, we record *flat* and straight. It's not as good as hearing them live, but it's the closest and truest we can offer.

It's easy to add effects to recordings, but it means you're altering the actual sound of the instrument- making the instrument's sound better than it really is. If you're buying online all you have are pictures and perhaps an audio rendering of the sound it produces. Since you're not able to hold or play the actual instrument in your hands you may be vulnerable to all sorts of observations, opinions and alternate realities.

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I remember when I was at Cirque du Soleil, I worked in casting and one day a tape came from a drummer who played amazingly. Sounded so good, the casting staff was anxious to invite the person to Montreal for an audition. When the person came, he didn't sound anything like that incredible recording. It's amazing what you can do with Pro Tools.

So, no tricks, no effects, just the flat truth.

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### The Performances

This video has 4 performances featuring instruments that earned the Player's Instruments ranking. All instruments from that category can successfully perform the styles of Early Music, Classical, Jazz and Folk, plus you get to hear what the instrument sounds like with accompaniment.

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### Models Tested: Wood vs Plastic

News is mostly good. There are many acceptable plastic recorders for any kind of playing conditions, from classroom, recording studio, right up to the concert hall. Most of my esteemed colleagues use them in a variety of ways. Not only are they affordable, but well made and well thought out. And for price, you're not going to find an inexpensive wood recorder equal to what good inexpensive plastics deliver. Good wood recorders require a lot of time and manufacturing handwork to bring them to their plastic cousin's level.

Conclusion: If you see a \$4 plastic and a \$6 wooden instrument, the choice is clear. plastic.

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### Choosing an Instrument

How to choose? The answer is, how it sounds to *you*, the player. Don't worry about the audience. Choosing recorders is a *subjective* experience—an individual choice. It's emotional, it's instinctive. When you put an instrument to your lips and put air into the chamber, you should fall in love with it. There are many models tested that meet that criteria.

Most plastics are inexpensive and consistent, but there are other plastics out there that are a total waste of money. Some teachers will buy strictly on price without trying them out, only to find they wasted their budget.



#### Appearance

Looks are fun. Colors are fun, thrilling for a first time user. But appearance

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is not the way to go. A well designed sounding instrument is. The recorder can play all sorts of amazing things and if you progress towards that direction you won't need looks to keep yourself or your students interested. It's not about looks, it's about the music.

So, are looks a gimmick? Our survey concludes, not if you pick the right one (see translucent chart, page 19). Many a beginner eye their first instrument imagining all the possibilities one can hope for. Dreaming is a good thing, but practice and progress will show you looks play second fiddle to playing well.

## The Database

### 4 Groups

**1. Player's Instruments:** You can't go wrong here. Any instrument on this list can do it all for the beginner, advanced amateur, teacher or pro.

BRAND/NAME	PRICE	STYLE	CONSTRUCTION	REPAIR	REWORK	TONE QUALITY	RESPONSE	TOTAL WEIGHT	SIZE OF KEYS	PHYSICAL FEEL	WEIGHTY FEEL	COMFORT/GRIP	ACCESSORIES	PRICE	COMMENTS	SCORE
Yamaha YRS-01B	\$115.00	Standard	2 piece ABS with plastic keys. Color: 12 piece.	2 piece +	Current	Excellent tone and range. Light and easy to play.	2 piece +	1.0 lb	Standard	Light and easy to play.	2 piece +	Standard	Standard	Standard	Good to middle A. Very easy to play. Excellent tone and range. Light and easy to play.	95
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**2. Acceptable:** These models are worthy and although not as good as Player's Instruments, are still a good choice. They may have some shortcomings like one or two- piece recorders with unadjustable bottom joints, or less ease in the upper register, but are suitable, reliable choices for beginners.

**3. The Drawing Board:** These are instruments that have some benefits, but held back with major issues that will hold you and your students back as well.

**4. Toys:** Not recommend.

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## Testing Categories

**Model:** Company brand & model



Mollenhauer  
Dream

**Price:** Plastic model prices range from \$1-58. Most models tend to price in the \$3-16 range. The Mollenhauer wood Dream recorder priced at \$156 was compared to its less expensive plastic equivalent Dream model at \$42. Several models ranked very high at prices ranging as low as \$3-4. All Lyons models, MIE Consort and the MPI Chorale were standouts. However it is advised buying below the \$3 price range is not the best option. If however one is on such an austere budget, check the inexpensive Acceptable models where the MIE 24 at \$2.50 ranked the highest. Old wooden recorders on sites such as Ebay are unknowns and not worth the money when compared to less expensive models ranked as Player's Instruments. The wood Schreiber Selecta of 1964 is a typical example.

The NUVO Recorder + is priced on the high end (\$15), but aside from its innovative approach to make right hand fingering easier, it underperforms and is not a good value. Dollar store instruments rank last and offer no value for any player.

**Style:** Most plastics emulate material types. Recommend are white for ivory (Suzuki), yellow for boxwood (Yamaha YRS-312B), brown for rosewood (Yamaha YRS-312B III) and black for ebony (MIE Consort). Some models add imitation ivory trim to the head, middle and foot joints (Zen-On).

Translucent models come in a variety of colors of which any Lyons model is recommended.

Period looks range from Renaissance (Mollenhauer), Baroque (Yamaha) and Modern (Hohner).

Unique among mostly baroque examples were the Mollenhauer Dream which is part renaissance/part modern with red glitter. On the odd end of fine instruments is the Hohner 9509 which looks either novel or strange. That is up to the player. Flutophones and Tonettes are a style all their own and NUVO is the most contemporary in looks where style commands the attention of the consumer's eye.



MPI Chorale

**Fingering:** Baroque or English fingering, tends to offer more keys in tune than German fingering, and is preferred among professionals. Only 2 German fingered models were tested, the MPI Choral which scored well and the D'Luca Student which didn't. German system is still offered in schools and if the focus is limited to playing only 2 keys in tune (CM & FM), then German fingering provides an advantage with the least number of cross fingerings required. We advise to aim higher and go for Baroque.

**Construction:** Instruments can come in 1, 2 or 3-piece models. A 3-piece has a removable head, middle and foot joint. 2-piece can only be adjusted from top and



Suzuki

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bottom, and a 1-piece is not adjustable at all which can be bad if the instrument is out of tune with itself, or worse, other instruments. 1-piece poses another problem for the pinky since the foot joint cannot be moved forcing the student to play in an awkward hand position. 3-piece instruments are your best options, not only for intonation, pinky position, but left hand users also.

Single holes produce the lower notes C & D. Double holes offers additional notes C# & Eb

**Material:** Plastic Abs & wood. The Yamaha YRS-312B is in part made with ecodear which is a plant-based resin and ranks as the best instrument tested.

**Bore:** Bore dimensions, cylindrical or conical are listed. Wider bores tend to produce more volume (Susato Wide Bore).

**Range:** All fine models (Tables I & II) can easily perform 2 octaves or more. Some models came up short (Grover Trophy Cambridge II, Harmony H-30S, NUVO Recorder +, Flutophone and all Dollar Store models)

**Windway:** Curved or Straight? Most of the best models use a curved windway which conforms to the shape of the cylinder/bore. Straight goes counter to that design principle. But in the final testing many straight windways ranked very high (Lyons Premium). Hohner uses a straight windway with 4 drain canals to minimize moisture buildup which did not compromise tone quality.

**Tone Quality, Finding the Sweet Spot:**

The sweet spot is where an instrument performs best from low to high. Blow too soft and it underperforms. Blow too hard and the tones spill into the higher harmonic. When finding the magic middle place, look for instruments that are focused, clear and bright. Most plastics produce a light quality. Mollenhauer stands out as the instrument with the darkest, richest tone in both wood and plastic models so it's worth the money because nothing else in plastic comes close.

A well focused instrument gives you other benefits. Yamaha's Ecodear model allows the upper register to play with ease. Lyons Premium & Suzuki's centered voicing enables a player to play greater lengths of phrasing. MIE Consort instrument offers exceptional tone, and the Yamaha YRS-24B provides great articulation possibilities. Another standout is the Tribert which phrases long and seamless in both registers.

On the other end, the Harmony H-30S did offer a nice lower register, but gets reedy in the upper. Add condensation and the tone grows thin and wispy before it disappears altogether, sucking a fair amount of air out of the player. This results in shorter phrasing as well as becoming an ear ringer. Other models like NUVO's Recorder + are simply shrill and flat, and all Dollar store models were breathy and unfocused.



Grover Trophy  
Cambridge II



MIE Consort



Yamaha Ecodear



Lyons Premium

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**Intonation:** All models are tested to play in tune at A=440 in 15 keys. Any person can make most notes play in tune by themselves, but it's advised to play a piece of music in a certain key to see whether all the notes line up properly. Testing a single note is misleading.

All recorders require three levels of breath pressure. Less in the lower, the most in the upper mid range and less than that in the upper octave. One breath pressure simply does not work for all notes. This is why many young students tend to spill notes into the upper register creating shrill loud tones that can be irritating.

Although there are some 1-piece models that successfully play at A=440 (Hohner, Canto), most 1-piece instruments ranked in the 3rd or 4th group. Many teachers find a 1-piece an advantage because there is less chance of students losing parts. If that's the case, limit your choices to Hohner or Canto.

Here's a breakdown of the Intonation scores.

- 20-24: Impressive
- 16-20: Very good
- 11-15: OK
- 6-10: Below average
- 0-5: Problematic
- 1 – 14: Stay away!



Aulos 903

The Autos 903 with dead-on intonation in the lower and upper registers, tested best with a score of 23. Seven other models scored 20 or better.

I take no pleasure panning an instrument and work to advise with care, but when it comes to bad intonation, that's a game breaker. On this lower end were the Harmony HR-304P which although in tune with itself in the lower register proved flat from C" to F#" , not to mention the upper register had to be pushed out of its sweet spot to play close in tune, scoring at 3. The MIE 175W, a one-piece instrument is not adjustable, therefore played sharp overall, scores at 2. NUVO Recorder + played flat overall and scores at 1.

The MPI Prelude, a one piece model, received the lowest score, -14. This one-piece instrument is incapable of playing in tune and proved sharp overall. Playing in the upper register became a lost cause as many notes played a quarter to a half step too high. The Dollar Store instrument couldn't make it through the test with flat notes all over the place.









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Four styles of our test music

Renaissance: Most of the repertory up to 1600 is played modally, which translates in modern keys that go as far as two sharps or flats. The range is usually an octave and a sixth, so c" to a"". Tested is a Praetorius *Branle from Terpsichore* in FM. A Special nod goes to the Dream Mollenhauers which are not only most at home with renaissance music, but everything else it touches.

Mollenhauer  
Dream in wood

Baroque in GM, CM & Am in JS Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*.

This work requires a recorder that comfortably plays 2 octaves from c" to shining c"". There are also high chromatics like g#" and Bb" that need to be played without notes popping into the wrong harmonic. This was perhaps the most difficult of our selections and only 25 models passed. The Susato Wide Bore which ranked √√, is not designed for this period but is more at home with jazz, folk, and, of all instruments tested, most at home in the rock world.

Jazz: Tested is the author's *Mary's Lamb* in CM. The term "close enough for jazz" can mean you can get away with lesser intonation qualities. That can be debated, but if any instrument had a score of at least √, it usually fell in the jazz category like the D'Luca Student. But the jazz genre does require skills in multiple keys and well peppered use of chromatics. The safe bet is an instrument that looks and sounds at home with this genre, the Yamaha translucent YRS-20BB.



Yamaha  
YRS-20BB

Folk

Tested were the traditional *Money in Both Pockets*, a gigue in DM, and *Caribou Reel* in Em. If you can't get hold of a Tribert, put your money on the Hohner. Although it's 1-piece, it does play very well in tune at A=440 and received a very high intonation score of 21 out of 24.



Tribert

Some instruments that play well in other genres didn't fare as well in this category the Harmony H147G √√√, MPI Sapphire √√√, Autos 323E √√, and Grover Trophy Cambridge √√ for example.

Other Notes: Some instruments are better suited for outdoor playing like the Aulos 903 √√√√ and the MPI Renaissance √√√√.

On the low end were Drawing Board and Toy instruments which failed to pass the proposed repertory test and received neither a √ or an X. The NUVO Soprano had intonation problems and could only play successfully in the lower register. The MIE 175W could play the repertory but was beset with intonation problems. The MPI Antiqua is not recommended for ensemble playing and plays flat, and the Angel Recorder has to be pushed to shriller regions which limits refinement and phrasing.

The Gibson Tonette got a curious ranking of both √ & x. Although it couldn't play any of our examples, there was an enclosed songbook with 20 tunes and 30 exercises/motifs to play upon. With a skilled player it can wing it in jazz in the key of CM.

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X ratings were given to NUVO's Recorder + which is confined to the lower register, the Flutophone where you'll have to invent your own repertory, and forget about making any kind of music at all with a Dollar Store brand.

**Craftsmanship:** Beauty outside and high craftsmanship inside were common in many models. Buying a nice looking instrument can on first sight, make the player feel good,

But does a good appearance make a well playing instrument? Looks can be deceiving. D'Luca Student looks great on the outside but has a questionable designed interior. One of the best looking instruments is the Harmony H-30S, a baroque style ebony color with ivory color trim. With its baroque fingering, fast response, fine physical feel, acceptable intonation, decent articulation and a great price, it had the looks of a winner. But with its problematic range in the reedy upper register, its tone quality makes ears ring, it turned out to be the worse entry of all 3-piece models and ended up in the Toy category.



D'Luca Student

Sometimes looks can indicate cheap quality. The Flutophone is shoddy inside and out with seems showing everywhere, and we won't even go into the Dollar Store eyesore.

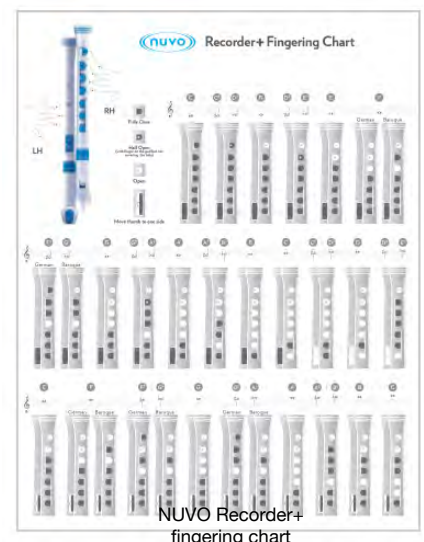
But there were exceptions. One of the strangest looking models defied preconceptions and ranked high in our survey, the Hohner. Although Germany is usually stereotyped for high quality products, the craftsmanship on this instrument looks odd and unsubtle, accompanied by visible seems along the side. But looks aren't everything. It ranked in the top 20 and tested as best 1-piece instrument.

Again a nod to the plastic Mollenhauer Dream which is unique in its red glitter and gold head/foot joints and a tapered beak for good lip position. And despite the NUVO Soprano Recorder ranking low in many categories, it ranks very high in craftsmanship and appearance. It is an instrument full of promise for the future.

**Accessories:** Most instruments come with a carrying case, cleaning rod and fingering chart. Other less common accessories include address card, joint grease, microfiber mop, adjustable thumb rest and a trill chart.

Special mention to Angel which had a very nice fingering chart, but winner goes to NUVO which designed probably the best looking fingering charts for any instrument.

The Autos 323E did not include a cleaning rod, and the Flutophone comes with nothing but the box it came in.



Hohner

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## Scores: A Summary and ranking of all the instruments

Recommended instruments are in the first two groups. Third & Forth groups are not recommended.

- |                           |        |
|---------------------------|--------|
| 1. Player's Instruments   | 59-32  |
| 2. Acceptable Instruments | 28-9   |
| 3. Drawing Board          | 10-0   |
| 4. Toys                   | 0- -26 |

Top score was 59. Yamaha YRS-312B


Lowest score was -26. Dollar Store instruments

★ Indicates unique qualities that outshone all other models in style, construction, tone expansion, versatility intonation and price.


X indicates poor qualities like craftsmanship, ease of playing, response, intonation, tone quality, range, and price. Check the database for greater detail.

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## PLAYERS INSTRUMENTS




#1 Yamaha YRS-312B 59 ★★★  
*Solid in sound. A very easy instrument to play. True solo quality. Flies with ease and is worth the money. Choice for the environmentally conscious.*




#2 Lyons Premium 53 ★★  
*Inspirational instrument brings the best out of the player. Highly recommended. There are a lot of decent instruments out there, but this instrument connects the notes so seamlessly. That's why it's super easy to play.*




#3 Pluma Suzuki SRE 530 47 ★  
*Impressive to look at and voiced for the soloist, it's overall qualities will impress the pro and the listener.*



#4 MIE Consort Series 2903BX 46 ★★★  
*Highly recommended. It does it all. Not as full as a good wood recorder, but plays quite well in the upper register with ease.*




#5 Yamaha YRS-24B 44  
*Yamaha's low-budget entry is a worthy solo instrument. If you want something light in tone and bright in its voicing, this instrument will do the job, especially outdoors.*




#6 Tribert Soprano 43  
*This amazing instrument may not be the best sounding one, but it can do anything quite well.*




#6 Yamaha YRS-20BB 43  
*An inspirational instrument for any kind of player. You can't go wrong with these models.*



#8 Zen-On Stanesby Jr. 42 ★  
*Steady as a rock. After nearly 5 decades this model has outlived many other brands. If you can get a hold of one, preferably new, you'll see why today's new plastics have greatly improved.*



#9 Mollenhauer Adria's Dream Recorder 41 ★★  
*Plays like a dream. A fine solo instrument that can find a place with other strong instruments. If you can't afford wood and want the darker sound characteristics of one versus lighter plastics, this is the model to choose.*



#10 Lyons R49BB 40 ★  
*A successful lightweight. The Premium model is better, but this instrument is more than worthy especially if you're looking for the cheapest thing around.*



#11 Yamaha YRS-302B III 39  
*Making the player feel good with appealing tone and on spot articulation justifies the price.*

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#12 Yamaha YRS-312B III 38 ★  
*More soloistic in sound rather than ensemblish. To master the intonation issues will require practice. For players with adept tuning skills. It's very bright solo tone quality would be better in the hands of a pro than a beginner.*

#13 Zen-On ZE-150BN 37  
*A joy to play. Pricy but it's a great instrument.*

#13 Aulos 903 37 ★  
*One of the widest bores measured and objectively, one of the finest instruments tested. Subjectively, one of the least impressive sound wise.*

#15 MPI Choral #211233 35 ★★★  
*Tone quality more appealing to the listener and less to the player. Not the most beautiful tone, but it's well built for a lot of tasks. If you insist on buying German fingering, this is the best one tested.*

#16 Mollenhauer Adri's Dream Recorder in pearwood 34 ★  
*You get what you pay for. Double hole model available for a few dollars more. Can play solo or ensemble.*

#16 Hohner 9509 34 ★ X  
*This ugly duck plays like a swan. Forget about the outside. The beauty is skin deep. It's playing quality warrants the price. The best of the 1 piece instruments.*

#18 Canto CR1010 32  
*Can't deny this instrument is well made. If only the tone color was less piercing.*

### ACCEPTABLE

#19 MIE 24 28 ★  
*Good all around instrument for all playing situations.*

#19 MIE Renaissance 28  
*Would fit nicely with a consort of renaissance instruments in appearance and sound. The d''' issue can be remedied by slurring into the note.*

#21 Aulos 303A-E 26  
*Aside from the pushing issues, this instrument is still impressive despite some intonation challenges*

#22 Susato Widebore Soprano 25  
*If Ethel Merman was a recorder... If you're looking for a powerful sound that sticks out, this qualifies. If you're looking for something that can play sweeter, look elsewhere.*

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#23 MPI Prism

24

*This nicely sounding and easy-to-play instrument shows a lot of promise but the F#s have to be fixed. If you're a school teacher and want a recorder that plays successfully at a quieter level, while limiting yourself to the flat keys, this is clearly your best option*

#24 MPI Sapphire

21

*One of the easiest instruments to play. If only those out of tune notes were fixed. Wear earplugs when practicing, learn the alternate fingerings for the F#s and C#, stay away from the bad keys and you're in business.*



#25 Harmony H147G

11

*Never completely zip the case to avoid bacteria buildup. Pinky hole could be an issue with a beginning player. Lots of good things to say about this model. Sand down the thumbhole for this agreeable lightweight.*

#26 MIE 180PR

10

*Flat notes can be played in tune. On the thin side but gets the job done*



#26 Aulos 323E

10

*An instrument that represents the good and the not so good. If your standards are not high, this instrument is acceptable. However there are cheaper alternatives which play and sound better. Easy and fun to play if you ignore the fine points of playing in tune. Better yet, spend half as much and get the Autos 903.*

#29 MPI Classic #211202

09

*A pro can make this instrument sound good, but intonation issues will create more challenges for a beginner.*



### THE DRAWING BOARD



#28 NUVO Soprano

10



*Stylish and attractive in appearance, hence the 1 star ranking. Tone quality needs to be improved. In order for it to play in tune, instrument has to be pushed beyond the sweet spot to shrillville.*

# 30 Grover Trophy Cambridge II

9



*If you stay in the lower octave this instrument is as good as any. A decent instrument but there are better ones for less money.*



#31 MIE 175W

7



*Light as a feather and fun to play, however intonation needs to be improved. If only the head joint was adjustable the problem could be minimized.*



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#31 Schreiber Selecta of 1964 7 X  
*A 60 year old vintage wood instrument that has held its own. Plastics have made major inroads in pitch however. X designation is based on price.*

#31 D'Luca Student 7  
*German system recorders always have intonation issues and this one is typical of the problems therein. You can get a good well tuned instrument for half the price of this one.*

#34 Angel Soprano 101 6  
*In spite of the shrill issues, the intonation and voicing are its most impressive points. Good tone quality can be obtained if not pushed. Not up to professional standards.*

#35 MPI Antiqua #211219 0  
*A potentially great instrument undermined by being flat overall. Not suitable for ensembles despite its ease of playing. For solo use only.*

#35 Gibson Tonette 0  
*It is what it is and does not pretend to be a serious instrument. If you want to travel back in time and hunt for this piece of bygone Americana, go for it. However you'll have to work the chromatics out on your own. Could it be improved? Yes. Is it easier to play than a recorder and worthy as an educational tool? Hard to say since it's time has come and gone not to mention challenging to find.*

### TOYS

#37 Harmony H-30S 0 X X  
*Looks aren't everything. Fix the voicing. Worst 3 piece entry.*

#38 NUVO Recorder + -2 X X X X X  
*Designed for beginners, especially those with physical or learning disabilities, it is pleasing to the eye rather than the ear. Could be used as a training instrument for the lower right hand. Out of tune and poor sound quality prevent it from playing a 2 octave range. Silicon pads are very close to the holes which may lower pitch.*

#39 Trophy Flutophone -14 X X  
*Has a unique sound, so don't write it off. Lots of problems keep it from playing in tune. Cannot compete with new models on the block. However, it's fun to play and can be effective in the hands of a professional. Not recommended for student education as it introduces kids to bad intonation habits. Needs a serious update.*

#40 Trophy Tudor TD185 -17  
*Not for professional use. Tone quality and uneven intonation in the registers make for a difficult instrument to love. In need of a serious makeover.*

#41 MPI Prelude #211204B -20 X  
*Another 1-piece casualty. Great tone quality and response are undermined by major intonation problems. Not for professional use or ensemble playing. Needs to be in 3 pieces with major*

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*intonation fixes. Students can find something better. Not horrible, but all those sharp notes and their alternative fingerings not listed on the fingering chart will stop you from playing well.*

#42 Harmony HR-304P -22 X  
*Good response cancelled by poor tone quality and bad intonation make this instrument hard to love. Fix the voicing and intonation.*

#43 Dollar Store Recorder -26 XXXXXX  
*Save your dollar.*



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## Recomendations

- Best looking ivory style: Suzuki
- Best translucent: Lynns Premium
- Best tuned instrument: Aulos 903
- Best baroque ebony look: Mie Consort
- Best original design category: Mollenhauer Dream
- Most environmentally conciencious: Yamaha Eodear
- Price value: \$3-5: Lyons Premium, Mie Consort, MPI Chorale
- Best in the baroque with ivory trim look: Zen-on Stanesby Jr.
- If you insist on a 1-piece, despite its drawbacks: Hohner 9509
- Best tone expansion possibilities: The MIE Consort, MPI Chorale.
- If you insist on German fingering: despite some setbacks: MPI Chorale

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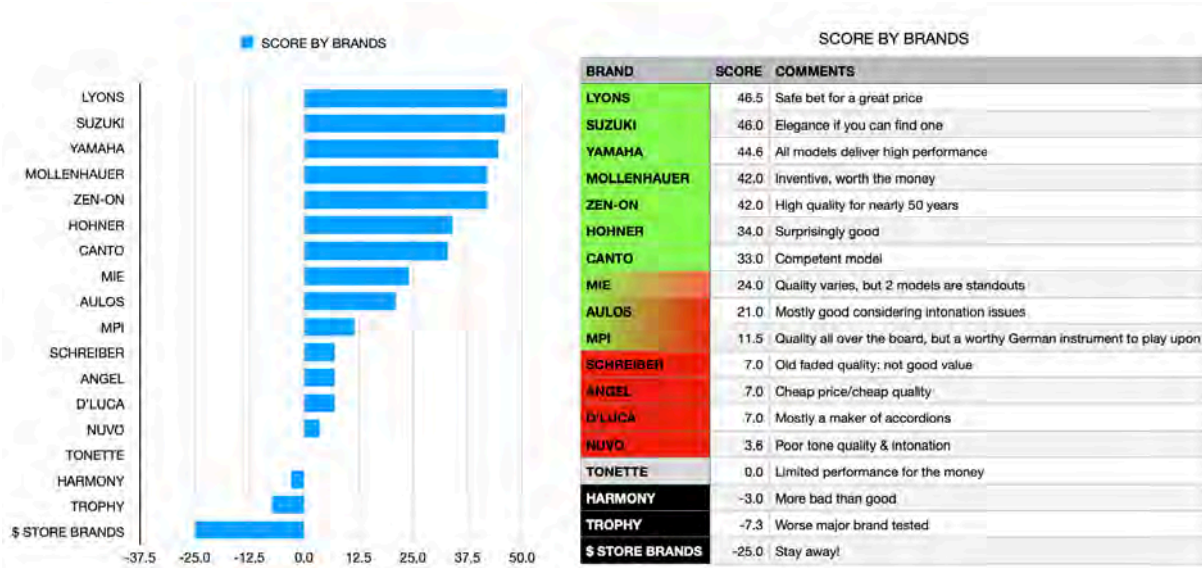
## UnRecommended

- Worst craftsmanship: Flutophone, Dollar Store Recorder
- Worst Tone Expansion: NUVO Soprano & NUVO Recorder +
- Worst tone quality: NUVO Recorder +, Dollar Store Recorder
- Worst appearance and craftsmanship: Hohner 9509, Flutophone, Dollar Store Recorder
- Worst tuned instruments: MIE 175W, NUVO Recorder +, MPI Prelude, Dollar Store Recorder
- Worst value/price: NUVO Recorder +, used Schreiber or any of the old wood recorders
- Worst instruments with limited range: Grover Trophy, NUVO Recorder +, Flutophone, Dollar Store Recorder



# Plastic Soprano Recorder Survey for Consumers

## Summary of Brands



1. Lyons: Best value and the dominant player in the translucent market
2. Suzuki: Although hard to find, the tone quality and ivory look is worth the search
3. Yamaha: All models of high quality. Worth the money no matter what you buy
4. Mollenhauer: innovative and of the highest quality. Worth the money although out of the price range of most schools
5. Zen-On: fine made instruments if you can find them (used)
6. Hohner: plastics are well made, a little on the pricy side
7. Canto: Far from the best, but a valid contender
8. Autos: good brand
9. Susato: unique and competent but very expensive
10. MIE: quality varies. Be sure you know what you're looking for whether for price or tone quality. 2 models stand out
11. MPI: quality all over the map from worthy to unworthy
12. Old wooden recorders: expensive and cannot compete with the newer models
13. Angel: cheap which means many things
14. De Luca: a maker known for accordions, not recorders
15. Harmony: one of the worst brands on the market
16. NUVO: just not in the same league of quality. Not recommended
17. Tonette: Clearly the better instrument when compared to the Flutophone. If one insists on educating students with these pre-recorder instruments
18. Grover: not high quality
19. \$ recorders: junk

# Plastic Soprano Recorder Survey for Consumers

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## Claims

Some brands advertise claims. Some live up to them, some don't, and then there are some claims that could go either way.

- √ Agree
- X Disagree
- ? Debatable
- No/Comment added

### Angel

- Easy-to-cover tone hole √
- Ideal for solo or ensemble playing: Why not
- Mellow tone: Debatable
- Refined finish ?

### Canto:

- Precise construction √
- Mellow tones ?
- Ideal for solo and ensemble playing — more solo due to its bright tone
- Refined finish- up to player

### Flutophone

- Tunable by mouthpiece √
- Pitched at A=440 √
- Excellent quality X
- Full chromatic scale X
- Visual finger guides X

### Lyons

- Precise intonation √
- Easy-to-cover tone holes √
- Has down-to-earth instructions √

### MIE Renaissance

- Handsome design √
- Produces mellow tones representing modern and renaissances style √
- Easy to cover tone hole √
- First quality abs construction √
- Ideal for solo and ensemble playing
- Refined finish and enduring body

### Mollenhauer:

- Instrument is made of high quality materials √
- Undergone careful tests for quality control √

# Plastic Soprano Recorder Survey for Consumers

- 2 year guarantee in which they will overhaul or exchange the parts of this instrument for damage not caused by improper usage. ✓

## NUVO

### Recorder +

- Warm mellow tone X
- Plays 2 octaves and is fully chromatic X

## NUVO Soprano

- Plays 2 octaves ✓
- Fully chromatic: Debatable

## Trophy

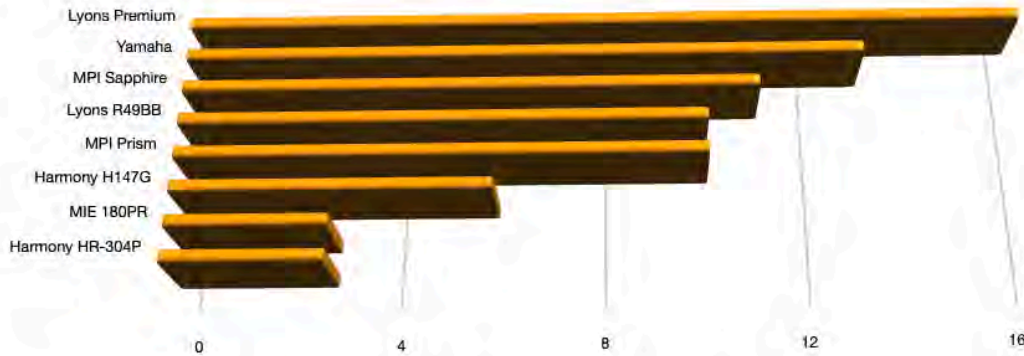
- World's finest recorders X

## Translucents:

How they rank in tone quality and playing

TRANSLUCENTS: OBJECTIVE/SUBJECTIVE SURVEY

OBJECTIVE SCORE	SUBJECTIVE SCORE	MODEL RANK	TOTAL SCORE	COMMENTS
Lyons Premium	Lyons Premium	Lyons Premium	16	Lyons Premium; Outstanding performance and value
Yamaha	MPI Sapphire	Yamaha	13	Yamaha: 1st class models
Lyons R49BB	Yamaha	MPI Sapphire	11	MPI Sapphire: Worthy despite intonation issues
MPI Prism	MPI Prism	Lyons R49BB	10	Lyons R49BB: Good quality for the price
MPI Sapphire	Lyons R49BB	MPI Prism	10	MPI Prism: Nice sounding as long as you don't play F#
Harmony H147G	Harmony H147G	Harmony H147G	6	Harmony's H147G: An agreeable lightweight
MIE 180PR	Harmony HR-304P	MIE 180PR	3	MIE 180PR: Inexpensive thin sound
Harmony HR-304P	MIE 180PR	Harmony HR-304P	3	Harmony HR-304P: Poor tone quality and intonation



The Lyons and Yamaha models show high quality for the money. Anyone would be happy with these choices. Most models fell in line with their rankings with exception to the Lyons R49BB and MPI Sapphire models. Harmony 304 is not recommended due to reasons stated.

# Plastic Soprano Recorder Survey for Consumers

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## Miscellanies

All plastic instruments are dishwasher safe and won't melt in your dishwasher.

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## Items not tested

1. Moeck Prima: Not available in the US
  2. Bright Glitter: \$1.17 Novelty use only. Classified as noisemakers
  3. Bulk Toy Store Recorders: \$1.46 available
  4. First Act: \$5.00 Claim is instrument not toy. Available from 5 Below
  5. Kasteco: \$7 German
  6. Kuhlassa: ?
  7. Lauren: \$3.65 3 piece available
  8. Ravel: \$1-10 German 3 piece available
  9. Schuling: \$6 Hard to find
  10. Steinhardt: \$8 Hard to find
  11. Thomas: \$5
  12. Toymith: \$5 Available
  13. Kuhlassa: Not available
  14. Bliss
  15. Halilit
  16. Maxtone: 1-3 models
  17. Woodnote
  18. Stagg: 2 models
  19. Dolmetsch Nova. Available in England
  20. Dioshe
  21. Eastar: \$11. German 3 piece. Looks serious. Baroque & German. Available
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## Conclusion

Choosing an instrument is subjective. It's personal. It's how you feel when you play it. This is something you can't test. In looking in the Player's category the difference between one instrument and another is like splitting hairs. So, choosing an instrument is mostly based on how it makes you feel when you play it.

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## Thanks to

Aldo Abreu, Chris Rua, Steve Lundahl, Sarah Cantor, The American Recorder Society  
Gail Nickless, Corbett Hein, Brittany Bauman, Kate Barnes, Todd Johnson,  
Clare Condell, Matt Kerns, Barbara Weiß-Bellinger, Jody Miller

