

## **PROMPT:**

***Please tell me the story of the HANDPAN from its beginnings (around 2007) as a copy of the HANG, which was invented by PANArt in Switzerland in 2000. There is now also a legal dispute over intellectual property rights. Please be as detailed as possible.***

2025-12-17



## **Overview**

- The handpan is a relatively young instrument whose origins can be traced directly back to the hang by PANArt (Bern, Switzerland).
- The hang was developed around 2000 by Felix Rohner and Sabina Schärer; from around 2007, the first instruments from other manufacturers appeared, for which the generic term "handpan" became established.
- There have been and continue to be discussions and legal disputes between PANArt and parts of the handpan scene that emerged later regarding trademark, design, and copyright issues.

## **Background: From the steel pan to the Hang**

- Technical roots:
  - Sheet steel, deep-drawn/formed into half-shells, heat-treated (e.g., nitriding) and fine-tuned by hammering.

- Inspired by, among other things:
    - Steelpan (Trinidad & Tobago),
    - ghatam/udu (Indian/African clay drums),
    - gongs and sound sculptures (gamelan, etc.).
  - PANArt (before Hang) was already known for steel pans in the 1990s and experimented with materials and acoustics of tuned steel bodies.
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## The invention of the Hang (PANArt, Bern) CH

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- Introduction: around 2000 (publicly presented in the early 2000s).
  - Features:
    - Two steel half-shells glued together to form a "UFO" shape.
    - Top: central "ding" (fundamental tone) with note fields arranged around it.
    - Bottom: Sound opening ("Gu").
    - Material treatment (e.g., nitriding) for stability and overtones.
  - Philosophy:
    - PANArt described the Hang as a "sound sculpture," not a drum.
    - Rejection of the term "hang drum"; deliberately small quantities, direct contact with interested parties, curated distribution.
  - Demand effect:
    - Extremely high demand met with low availability → waiting lists, gray market, growing global interest.
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## Hang generations at PANArt (simplified overview)

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- Early phase (approx. 2001–2005):
    - Several "first generations" with different scales/variants.
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- Later (approx. 2006–2009):
  - Refined models; change in selection and reduction in variants.
- "Integral Hang" (approx. 2008):
  - Highly focused model (including D minor character), homogeneous sound.
- "Free Integral Hang" (from around 2010):
  - Less oriented towards a tempered tone system; PANArt emphasized a free, sculptural sound aesthetic.
- End of Hang production (2013):
  - PANArt discontinued the Hang and presented new sculptures (e.g., Gubal, Hang Gudu, Hang Bal) in order to further develop its own sound world away from the "drum" logic.

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## **The transition to the "handpan" (from around 2007)** | 7.

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- Term:
  - "Handpan" established itself internationally as a neutral generic term for Hang-like instruments in order to avoid the trademarked name "Hang."
- Starting point:
  - The limited accessibility of the hang and the fascination with its sound motivated blacksmiths around the world to build their own versions.
- Initially strongly oriented towards the hang ("copy" in the sense of functional/acoustic reference), the handpan scene quickly developed into an independent instrument genre with innovations in construction, materials, and tuning.

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## **Early and influential manufacturers (selection, roughly chronological)** | 5.

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- Mid/late 2000s:

- Metal Sounds (FR) – Spacedrum (approx. 2006).
  - Kaisos Steel Drums (DE) – Caisa (approx. 2007/08).
  - Pantheon Steel (USA) – Halo (from around the late 2000s); the term "handpan" became widely used in this community.
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- Early 2010s:
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- Saraz (USA) – pioneer in additional bass notes ("mutant" concepts), among other things.
  - Echo Sound Sculpture (CH), Ayasa (IN), Yishama (IL), Bellart/BELls (ES), and many more.
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- Mid-2010s to present:
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- Many workshops worldwide (Europe, USA, Israel, India, etc.).
  - Specializations (e.g., stainless steel for longer sustain, individual sound signatures, larger tonal ranges, deep bass ranges).
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Note: Some data is approximate; the scene is characterized by craftsmanship and is not always centrally documented.

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## **Technical development and construction aesthetics**

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- Materials:
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- Nitrided steel (classic, controlled response).
  - Stainless steel (longer sustain, different overtone spectrum character).
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- Manufacturing:
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- Deep drawing/hydroforming/spinning/pressing; heat treatment; multi-stage hammering and fine tuning.
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- Tone fields:
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- Usually arranged around the Ding (top) + optional additional fields below.
  - Scales: D Kurd/D Celtic (chubby sound signatures) particularly popular; also major, harmonic/melodic minor, exotic modes.
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- Innovations:

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- Additional bass notes (greater range).
  - Modified geometries (steeper/flatter domes, varying dimple sizes, new layouts).
  - Surface finishing, rust protection, cases, and damping systems.
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## Community, culture, and dissemination 🇵🇷

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- Forums/networks (from around 2009): Online communities popularized the term "handpan" and knowledge transfer.
  - Festivals and meetings:
    - e.g., HangOut UK, GRIASDI (AT), and many regional events.
  - Viral popularity:
    - YouTube and social media (including duos/acts such as Hang Massive) made the sound world-famous and fueled the market.
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## Legal aspects and disputes ^-v\_-

Important: This is an informative summary, not legal advice. The legal situation may vary depending on the country and time.

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- Trademark law ("HANG"):
    - "Hang" is a term used and protected by PANArt for its sound sculpture.
    - Many manufacturers/sellers therefore use the generic term "handpan" and avoid terms such as "hang drum" in order to avoid infringing on trademark rights.
  - Design/registered design/copyright:
    - Over the years, PANArt has attempted to protect its creative/design achievements (form, concept, name) and has taken legal action against certain uses/imitations.
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- In various countries, there have been/are proceedings and disputes concerning:
 

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  - the scope of protection of the design (shape, arrangement of the tone fields, characteristic features),
  - the distinction between permissible imitation/functional necessity and impermissible imitation,
  - the use of the name "Hang" in trade/marketing.

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- The results have varied; in some cases, claims have been rejected or only partially upheld, while in others, the trademark rights to "Hang" have been strengthened, with "Handpan" continuing to be used as a generic term.
 

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- Practical consequence:
 

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  - Today, "Hang" is protected as a specific PANArt sound sculpture and trademark.
  - "Handpan" generally refers to the type of instrument of similar design made by other manufacturers.
  - Reputable suppliers avoid using the term "Hang" for non-PANArt instruments and distance themselves from misleading statements.

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Tip: Anyone interested in details of specific procedures should consult current, primary sources (court decisions, registry entries, official statements from PANArt and manufacturers), as the situation is constantly changing.

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## Timeline (simplified)

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- 1990s: PANArt builds and researches steel pans/steel sound bodies.
- 2000/2001: Introduction of the Hang; first generation(s).
- 2006–2009: Refinements; high demand, limited availability.
- From around 2007: First non-PANArt instruments appear; the term "handpan" becomes established.

- 2008–2013: Integral/Free Integral Hang; 2013 end of Hang production; new PANArt sculptures (Gubal, etc.).
  - 2010s: Rapid growth of the handpan scene, international manufacturers, festivals, social media boom.
  - 2020s: Mature craft community, diverse sound signatures, broad market; ongoing sensitivity to brand/design issues.
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## Current status (2025) ➡

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- Diversity:
    - Numerous manufacturers worldwide, different price and quality segments.
    - Wide choice of materials (nitrided/stainless steel), many scales and layouts, individual sound philosophies.
  - Practice:
    - Teaching, workshops, therapy/wellness contexts, stage and studio.
  - Legal awareness:
    - General acceptance that "Hang" is reserved for PANArt; "Handpan" = generic name.
    - Manufacturers pay attention to unique design elements and branding.
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## Tips for interested parties and buyers

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- Use terminology correctly:
    - "Handpan" for general use; "Hang" only for original PANArt instruments.
  - Manufacturer research:
    - Sound aesthetics (short vs. long sustain), material, tuning stability, service/tuning.
  - Legal:
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- Ensure reputable communication without misleading brand usage.
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- Further information:
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- Search for: "PANArt history Hang," "Handpan history," "Pantheon Steel Halo," "Spacedrum Metal Sounds," "Caisa handpan," "Saraz handpan bottom notes," "Integral/Free Integral Hang," as well as official statements/FAQs from PANArt.
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## Brief summary

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- The handpan scene emerged around 2007 as a direct response to the Hang invented by PANArt: initially strongly based on it, later with many independent innovations.
- Legally, the distinction between trademarked/design-protected design (Hang) and the generic genre (handpan) has been a recurring theme.
- Today, there is a broad, mature handpan culture with a respectful distance from the "Hang" brand and a strong focus on diversity and craftsmanship.





Absolutely! Here is the detailed history of the handpan, beginning with its descent from the Hang:

## **The birth of the handpan: A story of innovation, inspiration, and legal disputes J**

### **THE Origin: The Hang by PANArt (2000)**

The history of the handpan does not begin with the handpan itself, but with its revolutionary ancestor: the **hang**.

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- **Invention:** The hang was invented in 2000 by Felix Rohner and Sabina Schärer of **PANArt Hang Manufacturing Ltd.** in Bern, Switzerland.
- **Inspiration:** They developed the hang based on their many years of experience in building steel drums and inspired by instruments from around the world, particularly the ghatam (an Indian clay drum) and the steel pan from Trinidad and Tobago.
- **Concept:** The hang is an idiophone musical instrument consisting of two connected half-shells made of sheet steel. The upper shell ("ding side") has a central "ding" (a low-pitched sound surface) and a circle of tuned sound fields, while the lower shell ("gu side") has a hole in the middle that serves as a resonator and produces a Helmholtz resonator effect, similar to an udu.
- **Uniqueness:** The Hang was distinguished by its unique, ethereal sound, often described as soothing, mystical, and harmonious. It quickly became a cult object and was extremely difficult to obtain, as PANArt only produced a limited number each year and sold them directly to interested parties, often after a personal interview.
- **Philosophy:** PANArt regarded the hang not only as a musical instrument, but as a work of art with a soul and a special relationship

between the instrument and the player. They were very careful to protect the integrity and reputation of their instrument.

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### The emergence of the handpan: A new era (approx. 2007) ?

After the introduction of the hang, a new movement began to develop worldwide. Other craftsmen and inventors were fascinated by the sound and shape of the hang and began to develop their own versions. The term "**handpan**" was coined as a generic term for these new instruments to distinguish them from the original "hang" by PANArt.

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- **First imitations/inspirations:** Around 2007, the first handpan manufacturers began producing their own instruments, which were heavily inspired by the Hang. One of the pioneers in this movement was **Pantheon Steel** with their instrument "Halo" in the USA. They were eager to unlock the secrets of the Hang and develop their own manufacturing techniques.
  - **Technological development:** The manufacture of a handpan is extremely complex and requires specialized knowledge in metallurgy, acoustics, and craftsmanship. Manufacturers had to learn how to hammer steel sheets precisely to produce accurate pitches and overtone structures. This was a process of experimentation, research, and knowledge sharing within the growing community.
  - **Explosion in popularity:** The popularity of the handpan exploded in the late 2000s and early 2010s, not least due to videos on YouTube and other social media showing the hypnotic sound and beauty of the instrument. More and more people wanted to own a handpan, but the original hangs were virtually unattainable.
  - **Diversity of manufacturers:** Growing demand led to the establishment of numerous small and medium-sized handpan manufacturers around the world. Each manufacturer developed its own techniques, tunings, and aesthetic features, resulting in an incredible variety of instruments.
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### The legal dispute over intellectual property ^-v\_

The rapid spread of hang-like instruments inevitably led to tensions with PANArt, who wanted to protect their intellectual property and invention.

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- **PANArt's stance:** PANArt regarded the Hang as a unique creation that should not simply be copied. In the patents and design protection for the hang in the early years, particularly with regard to the shape and certain features of the sound fields. They often viewed handpan manufacturers as "imitators" who were profiting from their pioneering work.
  - **The challenge of patent law:** Enforcing patents for musical instruments is often complex.
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- **Functionality vs. aesthetics:** Patents often protect the *functionality* or a novel technical process, while design rights protect the *aesthetic form*. However, the hang is a combination of both.
  - **Similarities and differences:** While many handpans visually resemble the hang, there are often enough technical or design differences that make direct patent infringement difficult to prove.
  - **Collective knowledge:** The way in which the handpan community has shared knowledge over the years has made it difficult to identify individual "inventors" who have explicitly infringed patents.
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- **The case in Germany (Higher Regional Court of Düsseldorf):**

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- **Statement of claim:** PANArt has filed lawsuits against several handpan manufacturers in Germany, particularly with regard to the "Helmholtz resonator" effect and the specific arrangement of the sound fields, which they considered to be protected.
- **PANArt's central argument:** They argued that the imitators had unlawfully copied their "design language" and the technical innovations of the Hang.
- **Rulings and developments:** The legal disputes dragged on for years and led to varying rulings. In some cases, manufacturers were required to make certain changes to their designs or were prohibited from producing instruments that were too similar. In other cases, the lawsuits were dismissed because the courts did not see sufficient similarity or patent infringement.

- **Significance:** These legal disputes have had a major impact on the handpan industry and prompted many manufacturers to further diversify their designs and techniques in order to avoid potential lawsuits. They have also reignited the discussion about intellectual property in the musical instrument industry.
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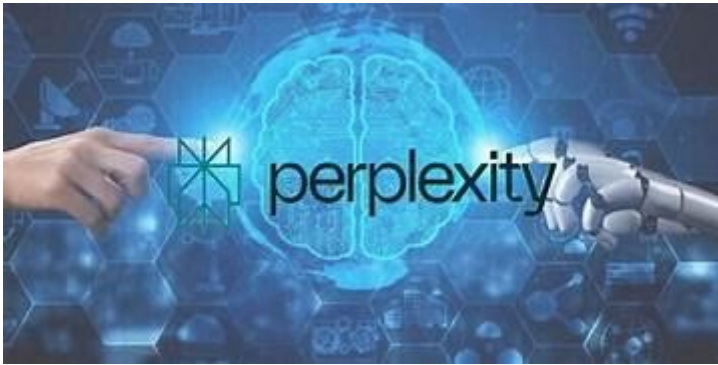
## Developments to date 🎵🔧

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- **Technical advances:** Handpan manufacturing has made tremendous progress. Modern handpans are often made of nitrided steel (for rust resistance and sound quality), and there is a wide variety of tunings, scales, and surface treatments.
  - **Global community:** There is a huge and dedicated handpan community of players, manufacturers, teachers, and enthusiasts worldwide. Festivals, meetings, and workshops are held.
  - **Instrumental diversity:** In addition to the classic "ding" and sound fields, manufacturers are experimenting with new shapes, materials, and resonance chambers to create unique soundscapes.
  - **The future:** Today, the handpan is an established musical instrument used in various genres, from ambient to world music to experimental music. Innovation continues, both in terms of manufacturing and musical application.
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The history of the handpan is thus a fascinating blend of creative engineering, cultural dissemination, and the challenges of protecting intellectual property in a rapidly evolving world.





## n The history of the handpan – From the HANG to today

The **handpan** is a relatively young musical instrument that has undergone a fascinating development over the last two decades – from a mysterious copy to a globally appreciated instrument with its own cultural and musical identity.

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### ? The birth: The HANG (2000)

- The story begins in Switzerland, more precisely in Bern, where the two metal sculptors **Felix Rohner** and **Sabina Schärer** invented the instrument **HANG** (derived from "hand" and "hang," which means "to hang" in Swiss German) in **2000**.
  - The HANG is a hemispherical, steel-bent shell with special sound fields ("dimples"). It is played with the hands and produces a unique, meditative sound reminiscent of bells, gamelan, or even singing.
  - The sound quality is based on complex physical principles: each sound field is tuned to produce several overtones simultaneously ("harmonics"), resulting in a rich, spherical sound.
  - PANArt, the company owned by the two inventors, produced the HANG in small quantities and sold it worldwide, primarily to musicians, therapists, and those interested in sound.
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### The copy: The birth of the handpan (around 2007)

- The HANG quickly became a sought-after instrument, but PANArt only produced a few units per year and refused to grant licenses.

- Around **2007**, other instrument makers, inspired by the HANG, began to build their own versions. These soon became referred to as **"handpans"** – a collective term for all instruments that resemble the HANG design but are not made by PANArt.
  - The first handpans were made in France, Germany, the USA, and later also in India, Russia, and other countries. Well-known pioneers included **Pantheon Steel** (USA), **PanArt** (not to be confused with PANArt), **Spacedrum** (France), **Pantheon** (Germany), and **Spectrum** (Russia).
  - The handpan often differs from the HANG in details such as material, construction, sound character, and number of tone fields. Many handpan builders experimented with new tunings, shapes, and even electronic enhancements.
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## J The spread and cultural development

- The handpan quickly found popularity around the world **sound art, meditation, New Age, and improvisational music**.
  - It has been used at festivals, in street music, in therapy, and even in classical concerts.
  - The instruments have been continuously refined: new tunings (e.g. "Integral," "Kurdish," "Celtic Minor"), improved materials (stainless steel, nitriding), and a wider range of tone fields (from 8 to over 20 tones) were developed.
  - The handpan scene became international: forums, festivals, YouTube channels, and even competitions were created.
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## The legal dispute over intellectual property

- PANArt claimed intellectual property rights to the HANG and attempted to protect the term "Hang." They sued several handpan builders for **trademark infringement** and **copyright infringement**.
- The courts mostly ruled that the **shape and sound** of the HANG are protected, but not the principle of the handpan as such. The

Handpan is therefore considered a separate type of instrument that is inspired by the HANG but is not identical to it.

- PANArt discontinued production of the HANG in **2013** and has since devoted itself to other projects. Handpan builders were allowed to continue building their instruments as long as they did not use the name "Hang."
- Today, the term "**handpan**" is internationally established as a collective term for all instruments of this type. The HANG remains a myth, while the handpan is a living, constantly evolving instrument category.

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### Current developments

- Today, the handpan is manufactured by hundreds of instrument makers worldwide. Each has their own style, their own sound philosophy, and their own clientele.
- The instruments are offered in different price ranges – from handmade unique pieces to industrially manufactured models.
- The handpan scene is internationally networked: there are festivals such as the **Handpan Festival** in Germany, the **Hang Massive** project, and many online communities.

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### Conclusion

The handpan is an example of how a creative idea—the HANG—can spark its own cultural movement. What began as a mysterious copy became an independent instrument that is now appreciated worldwide. The legal dispute over intellectual property has shown that innovation and inspiration are often closely related—and that, ultimately, music always continues.

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## **n The history of the handpan: From the Hang to a global movement**

### **The origins: PANArt and the Hang**

- The history of the handpan begins in 2000 in Bern, Switzerland.
- Felix Rohner and Sabina Schärer from **PANArt** developed the **Hang** (pronounced "hung").
- The instrument combined elements of:
  - Caribbean steel drums
  - Indian ghatams
  - Indonesian gamelan instruments
- The hang consisted of two metal half-shells joined together and produced warm, harmonious sounds
- The name "Hang" comes from the Bernese German word for "hand."
- PANArt deliberately limited production and sold its instruments only through personal contact

### **ç The birth of the handpan (ca. 2007)**

- Around 2007, various instrument makers around the world, inspired by the hang, began to develop their own versions.
- The term "**handpan**" emerged as a generic name for these new instruments
- Early pioneers included:
  - Pantheon Steel (USA) with the "Halo"
  - Spacedrum (France)
  - Caisa (Spain)



- These first handpan builders had to learn their craft through experimentation, as PANArt did not share any construction instructions

### **Expansion and development**

- 2009-2013: Rapid increase in new handpan manufacturers worldwide
- Emergence of different construction methods, tuning techniques, and scales
- Founding of online communities such as Handpan.org and the Handpan Makers Forum
- YouTube played a crucial role in spreading awareness of the instrument
- First handpan festivals and gatherings emerged
- Prices varied greatly, from around €1,000 to over €3,000 per instrument

### **Legal disputes**

- PANArt viewed the handpan movement critically and attempted to protect its intellectual property
- 2013: PANArt filed patents for certain aspects of its technology
- Several legal cases against handpan manufacturers followed, especially in Europe
- 2015: Significant legal dispute against Spanish manufacturer Ayasa/David Kuckhermann
- PANArt argued that the term "handpan" infringed on their rights and copied the concept of their Hang
- Most lawsuits focused on:
  - Patent rights relating to the tuning process
  - Trademark rights relating to the design
  - Unfair competition

### **The global handpan community today**

- Despite legal challenges, the handpan scene has continued to evolve
- Over 200 handpan manufacturers worldwide with different approaches

- Technical innovations such as:
  - New alloys for better sound
  - Advanced tuning techniques
  - Different shapes and sizes
- Establishment of professional handpan players and teachers
- Regular international festivals and workshops
- Development of a unique music theory and playing techniques

### **The future of the handpan**

- Increasing acceptance as a "serious" musical instrument
- Integration into various music genres (world music, meditation, jazz, electronic music)
- Ongoing challenges regarding intellectual property and standardization
- Growing scientific research on therapeutic use
- Efforts to establish quality standards and certifications

### **Cultural significance**

- The handpan embodies an interesting case study of modern instrument development in the digital age
- It reveals tensions between intellectual property and free cultural development
- As one of the few acoustic instruments invented in modern times, it has had a remarkable cultural impact
- The meditative quality of the handpan appeals to people worldwide and has found a loyal following

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The history of the handpan illustrates the complex relationship between innovation, inspiration, and imitation in musical instrument development and remains a fascinating chapter in contemporary music culture.

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## The History of the Handpan: From the Hang to Worldwide

The handpan is a fascinating musical instrument that has gained popularity worldwide over the last two decades. Its history is closely linked to the hang, the original instrument that served as inspiration. Below, I recount the development of the handpan, its origins, the copies from 2007 onwards, and the legal disputes surrounding intellectual property.

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### 1. The origins: The hang by PANArt (2000)

- **Invention in Switzerland:** The hang (pronounced "hung") was developed in 2000 by Felix Rohner and Sabina Schärer in Bern, Switzerland. They founded the company PANArt, which specializes in the manufacture of idiophonic percussion instruments.
- **Inspiration:** The hang was inspired by the steel pan from Trinidad and Tobago, an instrument made of tuned metal drums. Rohner and Schärer combined this concept with elements of other percussive instruments and created a unique, UFO-shaped instrument made of two metal half-shells joined together.
- **Construction and sound:** The hang is made of nitrided steel, which gives it a special hardness and resonance. It is played with the hands (hence the name "hang," which means "hand" in Bernese German). The sound is warm, melodic, and meditative, which quickly made it a popular instrument for spiritual and therapeutic purposes.
- **Limited production:** PANArt produced the hang in very limited quantities. Interested buyers often had to travel to Bern in person to purchase an instrument, and there were long waiting times. This made the hang a coveted collector's item.

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## 2. The beginning of the handpan as a copy (around 2007) ?

- **Demand exceeds supply:** Due to the limited availability of the hang and its high price (often several thousand euros), musicians and craftsmen around the world began to produce similar instruments. These were later called "handpans" to distinguish them from the original hang.
- **First copies:** The first replicas appeared around 2007. These were often made by independent craftsmen or small workshops that imitated the design of the hang but used their own materials and techniques.
- **Naming:** The term "handpan" was coined to create a generic name for these instruments. It is composed of "hand" (for playing with the hands) and "pan" (in reference to the steel pan).
- **Distribution:** The handpan quickly found a growing fan base, especially in the alternative music scene, among street musicians, and in the yoga and meditation community. The instruments were cheaper than the original hang and thus accessible to a wider audience.

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## 3. Differences between the hang and the handpan

Although the terms are often used synonymously, there are some differences:

- **Manufacturing:** The Hang is manufactured exclusively by PANArt, while handpans are produced by many different manufacturers worldwide.
- **Material and sound:** PANArt uses special nitrided steels and unique tuning techniques that make the sound of the hang unique. Handpans vary greatly in quality, material (often stainless steel or nitrided steel), and sound character.
- **Design:** While the Hang has a very specific design (e.g., the arrangement of the tone fields and the shape), handpan manufacturers often experiment with new layouts and scales.

- **Price and availability:** An original Hang is extremely rare and expensive (often over \$10,000 on the second-hand market), while handpans in are available in a wider price range (500 to 3,000 euros).
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#### 4. The legal dispute over intellectual property 🏛️

- **Trademark protection by PANArt:** PANArt has registered the name "Hang" as a trademark and considers the instrument to be its intellectual property. They view the manufacture of handpans as an infringement of their rights, as many of these instruments copy the design and concept of the Hang.
  - **Criticism of replicas:** Felix Rohner and Sabina Schärer have publicly spoken out against the mass production of handpans. They argue that handpan manufacturers are not only stealing their design, but also diluting the spiritual and artistic essence of their instrument.
  - **Legal action:** PANArt has taken legal action against handpan manufacturers in several cases, particularly in Europe. They have attempted to prevent the use of the term "hang" for other instruments and to prevent the imitation of their design. One prominent case was the dispute with a German manufacturer, in which PANArt was partially successful.
  - **Counterarguments from the handpan community:** Many handpan manufacturers and musicians argue that the hang is merely a further development of existing concepts (such as the steel pan) and that PANArt should not have a monopoly on the idea of a hand-played metal instrument. In addition, the handpan community has produced its own innovations that go beyond the original design.
  - **Current status:** The legal dispute is complex and varies depending on the country and jurisdiction. While PANArt has successfully protected the term "Hang," it has not succeeded in stopping the production of handpans in general. The term "handpan" has established itself as an independent designation and is accepted by the community.
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## 5. The development of the handpan to date 🏡

- **Global distribution:** Today, there are hundreds of handpan manufacturers worldwide, including well-known brands such as Saraz, Halo, Aura, and Yishama. Each manufacturer brings its own styles, scales, and designs to the table.
  - **Cultural significance:** The handpan has established itself as a symbol of mindfulness, meditation, and alternative lifestyles. It is often played at yoga retreats, sound therapies, and street performances.
  - **Technological advances:** Modern handpans are manufactured using advanced techniques, and there is experimentation with new materials such as stainless steel, which offer a different sound character.
  - **Community and festivals:** There is a vibrant handpan community with festivals such as "Hangout" in Europe and the US, where players and manufacturers come together to exchange ideas and make music.
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## 6. Conclusion and outlook \*•●

The history of the handpan is a story of innovation, inspiration, and conflict. PANArt's original Hang has become a global phenomenon that inspires millions of people. While legal disputes over intellectual property continue, the handpan has established itself as an instrument in its own right, far exceeding the vision of its inventors.

The future of the handpan looks promising: new technologies, materials, and creative approaches are driving the instrument's continued development. At the same time, the hang remains a symbol of the origins of this fascinating world of sound—a rare and almost mythical object that laid the foundation for a musical revolution.

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COPILOT Think Deeper

**Summary:** *The HANG was developed by PANArt in Bern in 2000; from around 2007 onwards, numerous replicas were produced, which are now known as handpans.*

*A protracted legal dispute over copyright and design protection escalated in 2020–2024 and led to a court ruling confirming the HANG as a copyright-protected work. [PANIVERSE.ORG](https://PANIVERSE.ORG) [handpan-timeline.org](https://handpan-timeline.org) Bonedo PANArt Hangbau AG [PANIVERSE.ORG](https://PANIVERSE.ORG).*

### **Origin and inventor**

The **HANG** was developed in Bern in the early 2000s by **PANArt Hangbau AG** (Sabina Schärer and Felix Rohner); it was designed as a new, hand-played metal instrument and first appeared around **2000**. PANArt produced the instrument in limited series and regarded the HANG not only as a musical instrument, but also as a designed [art](#) object.

### **Spread and the birth of the handpan scene (around 2007)**

From around **2007**, other craftsmen and small workshops around the world began to produce similar instruments inspired by the HANG. These replicas were generally referred to as **handpans** and quickly spread in street music, yoga, and New Age circles. Production diversified: different shapes, scales, and manufacturing processes emerged, and an international community of players and manufacturers formed [handpan-timeline.org](https://handpan-timeline.org).

### **Commercialization, terminology issues, and conflicts**

As demand grew, dealer and manufacturer networks emerged; at the same time, PANArt became increasingly concerned about protecting its own design and brand. The debate revolved not only around technical differences, but also around the question of whether the HANG should be considered **a work worthy of copyright protection** or "merely" a functional musical instrument. These tensions

led to formal disputes between PANArt and parts of the handpan industry [PANIVERSE.ORG Bonedo](https://PANIVERSE.ORG/Bonedo).

### The legal dispute and court decisions

In October **2020**, a legal proceeding took place in which a group of manufacturers and dealers (the plaintiffs) and PANArt came into conflict; the legal proceedings dragged on for years. In July **2024**, the High Court of the Canton of Bern handed down a widely noted decision: the court recognized the HANG in its various versions as **a copyright-protected work**, thereby confirming PANArt's claim to intellectual property; the decision may still be appealed [Bonedo PANArt Hangbau AG](https://PANArtHangbauAG.com).

### Consequences for the scene and outlook

The decision has **practical and symbolic consequences**: manufacturers and retailers must review their offerings from a legal perspective, rethink names and designs, and consider possible licensing or adaptation strategies. The community continues to discuss artistic freedom, craft traditions, and the balance between intellectual property protection and cultural dissemination. PANArt has published and commented on the ruling; independent blogs and specialist websites document the chronology and legal details in detail [at PANIVERSE.ORG](https://PANIVERSE.ORG).

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**Key points: HANG 2000 (PANArt); widespread handpan production from ~2007; court ruling 2024: HANG protected by copyright** [PANIVERSE.ORG handpan-timeline.org](https://PANIVERSE.ORG/handpan-timeline.org) [Bonedo PANArt Hangbau AG PANIVERSE.ORG](https://PANArtHangbauAG.com). If you like, I can create a **chronological timeline** of the most important events (2000–2024) or summarize the key legal arguments of the court decision.

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COPILOT Search

### Short answer:

The **HANG** was developed in **2000** by **PANArt Hangbau AG** (Sabina Schärer and Felix Rohner) in Bern. From around **2007** onwards, replicas known as **handpans** began to appear worldwide. This development led to a major legal dispute: in July **2024**, the Bern High Court ruled that the HANG is a **copyright-protected work** and that PANArt owns the intellectual property rights to it.

[PANArt Hangbau AG Bonedo handpan-timeline.org PANIVERSE.ORG ra-juedemann.de.](#)

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### • ★ ” = † Origin of the HANG (2000)

- Developed by **PANArt** in Bern, Switzerland.
- Combination of sheet steel, sound sculpture, and percussion instrument.
- Characteristic features: **lens-shaped form**, central dome ("ding"), circularly arranged sound fields, resonance hole on the underside.
- PANArt saw the HANG not only as a musical instrument, but as a **work of art** with its own identity. [Bonedo](#).

### Emergence of the handpan scene (from around 2007)

- From **2007** onwards, other workshops around the world began to build similar instruments.
- Since PANArt protected the name "Hang," the term "**handpan**" became established for replicas.
- The scene grew rapidly: street musicians, yoga and meditation circles, and experimental musicians made the handpan popular.
- Different manufacturers developed their own scales, materials, and construction methods—the variety increased greatly.

### 🚩 Conflicts over intellectual property

- PANArt was increasingly concerned about **commercialization** and the mass production of copies.
- The point of contention: Is the HANG a **functional musical instrument** or a **copyrighted work of art**?
- In 2020, around **25 manufacturers and retailers** filed a lawsuit against PANArt to have their products declared not to be in violation of copyright law [handpan-timeline.org](https://handpan-timeline.org).

### Court ruling 2024

- On **July 2, 2024**, the **Bern High Court** ruled that all versions of the HANG are **protected by copyright** [handpan-timeline.org](https://handpan-timeline.org) [ra-juedemann.de](https://ra-juedemann.de).
- The ruling applies not only in Switzerland, but also under German and Dutch law.
- This confirmed that only PANArt owns the rights to the original HANG design.
- Consequences: Manufacturers of handpans must check whether their instruments are legally permissible. The community is engaged in intense discussion about the balance between **artistic freedom** and **intellectual property protection**. [Bonedo](https://bonedo.org) [PANIVERSE.ORG](https://PANIVERSE.ORG).

### Significance for the future

- The ruling sets a precedent: musical instruments can be protected by copyright as **applied art**.
- For the handpan scene, this means uncertainty, but also the opportunity to develop new designs that are clearly different from the HANG.
- PANArt itself emphasizes that it is not a matter of banning music, but rather of respecting the **artistic contribution** of the HANG. [PANArt Hangbau AG](https://PANArtHangbauAG.com).

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### Conclusion:

The history of the handpan is closely linked to the HANG from PANArt: **invented in 2000, replicas became widespread in 2007, legal disputes arose between 2020 and 2024**, and today there is tension between **innovation** and **copyright protection**.

Would you like me to provide you with a clear **chronological timeline (2000–2024)** of the most important events?

Sources: [PANArt Hangbau AG Bonedo handpan-timeline.org](#) [PANIVERSE.ORG](#)  
[ra-juedemann.de](#)

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COPILOT Quick response

With pleasure – here is a detailed account of the history of **the handpan**, its roots in **the Hang** from PANArt, and the subsequent legal disputes:

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## 1 Origin: The Hang (2000)

- **Inventors:** Sabina Schärer and Felix Rohner from **PANArt Hangbau AG** in Bern, Switzerland.
  - **Premiere:** The Hang was introduced in **2000**.
  - **Features:**
    - Lens-shaped steel sculpture with a central dome ("ding") and circularly arranged tone fields.
    - Underside with resonance hole ("Gu").
    - Played with the hands instead of mallets – hence the name "Hang" (Bernese German for "hand").
  - PANArt saw the Hang not only as a musical instrument, but as **a work of art** with its own identity. Production and distribution were strictly limited; interested parties had to apply in writing.
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## 2 Emergence of the handpan scene (from around 2007)

- From around **2007**, other workshops around the world began to build similar instruments.
- Since the name "Hang" was protected, the term **"handpan"** became established for these replicas.
- The scene grew rapidly:

- street musicians, yoga and meditation circles, and experimental musicians made the handpan popular.
  - Different manufacturers developed their own scales, materials, and construction methods.
  - The community formed internationally, with festivals, online forums, and lively exchanges.
  - While PANArt discontinued production of the Hang after a few years, the handpan spread as a **global phenomenon**.
- 

### **Conflicts over intellectual property**

- PANArt became increasingly concerned about **commercialization** and the mass production of copies.
  - The point of contention: Is the Hang a **functional musical instrument** or a **copyrighted work of art**?
  - In 2020, around **25 manufacturers and dealers** filed a lawsuit against PANArt to establish that their products did not constitute copyright infringement.
  - PANArt argued that the hang was a **design with artistic character** and therefore had to be protected by copyright.
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### **Court ruling 2024**

- On **July 2, 2024**, the **Bern High Court** ruled that all versions of the Hang are **protected by copyright**.
- The ruling applies not only in Switzerland, but also under German and Dutch law.
- This confirmed that only PANArt owns the rights to the original Hang design.
- Consequences: Manufacturers of handpans must check whether their instruments are legally permissible. The community is engaged in intense debate about the balance between **artistic freedom** and **intellectual property protection**.

- PANArt published the ruling and emphasized that it is not a matter of banning music, but of respecting the **artistic merit** of the Hang.
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### **Significance for the future**

- The ruling sets a precedent: musical instruments can be protected by copyright as **applied art**.
  - For the handpan scene, this means uncertainty, but also the opportunity to develop new designs that clearly distinguish themselves from the Hang.
  - PANArt itself sees the ruling as confirmation that the hang is a **unique artistic creation**.
  - The scene remains vibrant: festivals, new manufacturers, and players worldwide are helping to ensure that the handpan remains popular despite legal restrictions.
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### **Conclusion:**

The history of the handpan is closely linked to the Hang from PANArt:

- **2000:** Invention of the Hang.
  - **2007:** Start of worldwide handpan production.
  - **2020–2024:** Legal dispute over intellectual property.
  - **Today:** Tension between innovation and copyright protection – and at the same time a vibrant, creative music culture.
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## n The history of the HANDPAN: From HANG copy to global phenomenon

### ↓ Origin: The invention of the HANG (2000)

#### Development by PANArt

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- **2000:** Swiss company PANArt Hangbau AG invents the HANG
  - **Inventors:** Felix Rohner and Sabina Schärer in Bern
  - **Inspiration:** Combination of steel pan, ghatam, and other instruments
  - **Features:** Two interconnected steel half-shells with clay panels
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#### Special features of the original HANG

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- ★ Handcrafted unique pieces
  - ★ Very limited production
  - ★ High price and long waiting lists
  - ★ Mystical aura surrounding the instrument
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#### The emergence of the HANDPAN (from 2007) First imitations

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- **2007:** First attempts to replicate the HANG
  - **Pioneers:** Kyle Cox (USA) and other instrument makers worldwide
  - **Motivation:** High demand with extremely limited supply of HANGs
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#### Development of the term "handpan"

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- 🇮🇳 Term coined to distinguish it from the original HANG
  - 🇮🇳 Should avoid legal conflicts
  - 🇮🇳 Became the generic term for all similar instruments
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#### dispute over intellectual property

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#### PANArt's position

-  Considered HANDPAN manufacturers to be imitators
  -  Felt intellectually and technically robbed
  -  Tried to protect rights to design and concept
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## The development of the market

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- **From 2010:** Rapid growth of the HANDPAN community
  - **Worldwide:** Over 400 manufacturers in 40+ countries
  - **Price range:** €800–€4,000 for different quality levels
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## J Technical development and diversity Differences from the original HANG

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- Various steel alloys
  - Different tunings and scales
  - Diverse construction methods and designs
  - Different sound characteristics
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## Well-known HANDPAN manufacturers



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-  **Pantheon Steel** (USA) - Halo
  -  **Saraz** (USA)
  -  **Axiom** (Germany)
  -  **Isthmus** (Canada)
  -  **Oval** (Germany)
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## #/■ Current situation (as of 2024)



### PANArts withdrawal

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-  2013: Discontinuation of HANG production
  - 2014: Presentation of GUBAL as successor
  -  Focus on own artistic development
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### 's flourishing HANDPAN community

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-  Worldwide festivals and workshops
-  Online learning platforms






-  Constant technical improvements
  -  Growing popularity in music productions
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## Conclusion

The history of the HANDPAN shows:

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- How a protected invention can give rise to an entire family of instruments
  -  The tension between copyright protection and cultural dissemination
  -  The power of community-driven innovation
  -  How an instrument can inspire a global musical movement
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The evolution continues—with new designs, materials, and musical applications!

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