

DREMEL

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MAKER OF THE MONTH LUTHIER LEROY AIELLO

People really trust LeRoy Aiello.

Guitar players and collectors have a spiritual connection to their instruments, so it takes a lot of faith to hand over their most prized possessions to [Aiello Guitars](#). They're perfectly safe, though, as LeRoy's steady hand and years of experience as a luthier give him the perfect tools to breathe new life into old instruments.

And LeRoy has another precision tool at his disposal – a Dremel rotary tool.

We asked LeRoy about his career and how he uses Dremel tools in his work.

How long have you been working on guitars, and how long into your career did you start using a Dremel?

I've been repairing and restoring guitars for 30 years. I spent two years on the road as a touring tech, and then I started apprenticing at Mandolin Bros., where I was able to work on some of the finest stringed instruments around. I left there in 2010 to open [Aiello Guitars](#).

I started using Dremel products approximately a year after I started at Mandolin Bros., which would've been in 1988.

Do you specialize in repair and maintenance, or do you also build guitars from scratch?

My specialty is restoration, but do have two designs that I will be building soon.

Do you play the guitar as well? If so, which came first, your interest in playing guitars or your interest in repairing guitars?

I started playing guitar before I gained an interest in the technical side of the instrument. I wanted to know how the instrument worked, so I could make adjustments to my own guitars. Once I started to learn the basics, the floodgates opened up and I was hooked.

What motivated you to start working on guitars yourself, rather than sending them off to someone else for maintenance and/or repairs?

At the time, the repairmen I was using were very good, but they weren't players. They had a technical knowledge of the guitar, but not the understanding that a "general" adjustment doesn't work for everyone. You have to know your customer and equally know their style and instrument.

Do you work exclusively on guitars, or do you use your Dremel for working on other string instruments as well?

I work on mandolins as well. I use the Dremel for replacing inlays in fingerboards and cutting precise slots in bridges.

Which Dremel rotary tool(s) do you use? Are there bits or accessories that get used most frequently?

Currently I use a [Dremel 4000](#) and a [Dremel Fortiflex](#). I use the [engraving cutters](#) and the polishing [brushes](#) and [wheels](#).

What kind of tasks does a Dremel rotary tool help you accomplish? What are the advantages of using a Dremel over manual tools?

I use the Dremel 4000 for cutting slots in the fingerboard to put frets in properly. I also use it with a base attachment to cut precise slots in acoustic guitar bridges to make a snug fit for the saddle. The Fortiflex is great for the artistic work. When I replace an inlay in a guitar or mandolin from the 1900s or even earlier, I have so much control over the cutter. I feel like an artist with a brush. I still use manual tools to clean a fret slot here and there, but the Dremel is precision, pure and simple.

Are there any tasks in which you could use a Dremel, but you still prefer to use a manual tool?

Before the Dremel was available, cleaning slots in the fingerboard to the right depth and thickness was done with a hand saw. Even if you put a stop on the saw, it's still not perfect, and it's time-consuming. There's no guesswork when the Dremel is in play.

Learn more about LeRoy and his lutherie work at AielloGuitars.com.

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Safety reminder: When working with Dremel tools or any power tool, always wear eye protection and a dust mask, and read and understand the owner's manual prior to using.