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Thalia's Capo, a Success Story

By Sophie Braccini



Thalia and Chris Bradley; Thalia's guitar sports a brand new capo. Photo Sophie Braccini

Entrepreneurship must be in Orinda resident Thalia Bradley's genes; how cool is it for a 12-year-old to be at the initiation of an invention, and the creation of a product that blew all expectations on Kickstarter? The most important thing Thalia discovered is that at the root of any invention is the identification of a need, and that needs are all around us in our everyday life waiting to be recognized and transformed into great business ideas.

Thalia was 8 years old, lounging in her bedroom, when she spotted discordance - on her wall was a poster of Taylor Swift with a guitar. "I noticed how unaesthetic the capo on the guitar was," remembers the OIS student. "I thought it should match her guitar." A capo is a device that clamps down on the fret to change the key. Thalia, a guitar student herself, also found that moving the capo required her to stop playing and was not easy for little hands.

Thalia shared her thoughts with her father, Chris Bradley - a serial entrepreneur. In his futuristic half-dome lab, prototypes of inventions that became commercial successes can be found on every shelf. Bradley listened to his daughter, recognized the bright idea and started working with dual specifications: create something that has the same aesthetic and craftsmanship as a guitar and can be easily operated with one hand while being strong enough to maintain pressure on the strings.

"It took us four years to design the end product," says Bradley, handling a beautiful capo, inlaid with rosewood. "At some point we almost gave up," he adds, recalling the difficulties the engineering group of 2ND Edison, Bradley's company, had creating a proper spring to hold the capo in place but still release easily. He says that the result met all expectations. "All along the process Thalia was very involved, testing it, giving advice on the different inlays."

The capos come in 32 different finishes, including Birdseye maple, rosewood, lacewood, and blue abalone. The part that presses on the cords, the sliding fret pad, is made of a proprietary material composed of thermoplastic and Teflon, making it super strong, yet smooth and non-sticky.

In order to fund the budding company, Bradley decided to put the project on Kickstarter, a crowd-funding platform; Kickstarter gives people 22 days to raise the money they need. Their initial goal was to raise \$10,000; if additional funding was obtained they planned to expand the project. Within 22 days, Thalia Capo raised \$195,221 with 3,846 backers from all over the world. "People went crazy over the capos," said Bradley, "they bought two or three of them; they match the inlays to their different guitars." Bradley said that they knew the capos were a great idea, but seeing that thousands of people were willing to buy them even before they were produced was validation.

Now the Bradleys are in the production phase and will soon ship the first capos. The metal parts are made in Asia. Bradley said he looked for a local manufacturer but could not find one with competitive pricing. The different wood and abalone inlays come from the U.S. "We cut it ourselves with our laser cutter and fix it on the capo," he explains. "We test each of them ourselves before putting them in the shipping box." Thalia participates in this process, putting on white gloves and making sure the capos are polished and free of any marks before shipment.

Bradley deposited patents for the capo. His daughter's name is on the ownership list and she is also part of the company that manufactures the capos. Capos can still be pre-ordered on

Kickstarter at www.thaliacapos.com/latebacker.

Thalia wants to carry this business on for a while, and have it ramp up. The online store will open in 2015. "I want to grow the business for a least a year and then we'll make a decision," said Bradley. In the meantime, he adds, Thalia has had another great idea - but he was not willing to divulge any details.

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