

Gifts for Gamers

CRANK IT UP!

Take your act beyond the virtual concert stage.

MUSIC-BASED VIDEO games are so hot these days that you can barely touch them with a 10-foot microphone stand. Between *Guitar Hero World Tour*, *Rock Band 2*, *Wii Music* and *SingStar Vol. 2*, kids can rock out on the virtual stage with almost any instrument. So why bother with the real thing? Well, for openers, because you might actually learn something for a change while you're having fun.

According to a recent Guitar Center survey, as many as 81% of virtual musicians have been inspired to play a real instrument and would like to receive one as a gift this holiday season.

If you're intent on making the band in 2009, then ask Santa to bring you a starter instrument. Fret-



Video games like *Rock Band 2* may inspire youngsters to try real-world instruments.

light (fretlight.com, from \$299) has a full-sized, computer-powered teaching guitar for anyone inspired by Slash. You can go either acoustic or electric. The guitar plugs into your PC or Mac, and video-based lessons will walk you through scales, chords and a variety of songs that are illustrated on the guitar's lighted fretboard.

If you're more of a beat maker, Disney's Camp Rock Electronic Drum Set (disneyshopping.com, \$39.50) lets you play along with preset rhythms using five drum pads that light up when you hit them. As you play, you can change the tempo and rhythms. The portable drums come

A miniature piano like this First Act Discovery Grand Piano is a great place to start out for little hands.



with AA batteries and two plastic drumsticks.

Little Alleia Keys wannabes are sure to be fans of First Act, the manufacturer behind a line of kid-friendly instruments, including a miniature piano. The First Act Discovery Grand Piano (shop.firstact.com, \$99.99) comes with Peel & Place color performance stickers so your child can, for instance, place the "E" sticker on the "E" piano key; then peel it off once he has memorized that note. A song book and wooden piano bench are included. The baby grand comes in both black and pink, so young musicians still can express themselves via color, even without having a video game avatar.

This starter guitar from Fretlight is computer-powered and lets you go acoustic or electric.



—Melanie D.G. Kaplan