



HARMONICOCCUS

“Monster Harmonica Workbench” with Kinya Pollard
Mel Bay’s HarmonicaSessions® eZine

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The other day my wife ventured into the dark, dank recesses of the HarpSmith Workshop, where she came upon the initial opening of a well-played harmonica I was working on. She was simultaneously repulsed and intrigued by all the 'crud' found throughout the comb and reed plates. I say repulsed and intrigued because, like me, she is very meticulous and concerned about sanitation, but she is also a student of Life Sciences. "Project!" she exclaimed, "This has to be tested."

Gleefully, my wife snatched up the harmonica parts and took them down to the Microbiology Department at our local University. The instructors and their students began the processes of growing, testing, and identifying this special harmonica crud. After several weeks of not hearing from the folks in the Microbiology Lab, we went down there ourselves to see how the tests were progressing and their subsequent results. The lab personnel could barely contain their excitement when they revealed that a whole new strain of bacteria was discovered! They named it *Harmonicoccus* in honor of all you Harmonicats out there. You can read more about it in next month's issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

All kidding aside, how does one maintain a level of sanitation that will satisfy your particular state of neurosis? After all, the best defense is a good offense. Don't eat or drink (H₂O is OK) before playing your instrument. If this is not possible, gargle or brush your teeth before playing.

Spit-Shining

- 1) After playing, tap the mouthpiece against your palm or thigh to dislodge and remove excess saliva.
- 2) Sanitize the mouthpiece by spraying germicide, then letting it sit for no less than one minute before wiping. I use Sterisol or Sanimist, which I purchased at the local music store.



Germicide Dip (Low Mileage)

- 1) Place harmonica in a Germicide Bath for no less than ten minutes to thoroughly disinfect. Again, I use a solution made from Sterisol or Sanimist.
- 2) Tap the mouthpiece against palm or thigh to dislodge and remove excess solution, or use hairdryer.
- 3) Dry thoroughly with clean paper towel or cloth.



Germicide Dip (Medium Mileage)

- 1) Disassemble harmonica into separate components: cover plates, comb, and reed plates.
- 2) Place components in a Germicide Bath for no less than ten minutes to thoroughly disinfect. I use a solution made from Sterisol or Sanimist.
- 3) Using a toothbrush, gently clean the crud from components, being careful not to bend reeds.
- 4) Dry thoroughly with clean paper towel or cloth, or blow-dry, then reassemble harmonica.



Ultrasonic Cleaner (High Mileage)

- 1) Disassemble harmonica into separate components: cover plates, comb, and reed plates.
- 2) Place components in the Ultrasonic Cleaner for ten minutes or longer to loosen the crud for more effective disinfection. Use the manufacturer recommended solution.
- 3) Place components in Germicide Bath for ten minutes or more to disinfect.
- 4) Using a toothbrush, gently clean the components, being careful not to bend the reeds.
- 5) Dry thoroughly with clean paper towel or cloth, or blow-dry, then reassemble harmonica.

6) Polish cover plates with "SEMICHROME" paste to remove tarnish and restore to factory like luster (Imported from Germany by Competition Chemicals, Iowa Falls, Iowa 50126).



There exists a symbiotic relationship between your harmonica and Harmonicoccus (coagulated saliva). Unless you have already modified your harmonica (refer to past issues of Harmonica Workbench) to eliminate leakage between the reed plates and comb, a little bit of Harmonicoccus can be a good thing! Harmonicoccus serves a role in the performance of your instrument by providing an airtight seal, preventing air from escaping between the reed plates and comb so playing is easier and the sound is cleaner.

We hope you have as much fun with your science experiment as we had!

Kinya & Barbara Pollard

Mr. & Mrs. Harpsmith