



The Harmonica Bail Out “Monster Harmonica Workbench” with Kinya Pollard

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In today’s uncertain and erratic economy, replacing harmonicas will become difficult for many. In fact, I have read somewhere that throwing the customary harmonica into the audience (i.e. guitar Gods flicking their picks into the audience) after a particularly passionate set is becoming a rarity.

Instead solid maintenance strategies and refurbishment of your existing “shoe box” inventory may be the wisest investment at this time.

Congress calls this a “bail out” plan, but the Harpsmith calls it a “Rescue Plan.” This plan includes:

1. Sanitize to remove Harmonicoccus
2. Modify and Polish cover plates
3. Modify and remove scratches from comb
4. Super Tuning
5. Reed Replacement (you wouldn’t throw away a guitar over a broken string would you?).

This installment will focus on items 1 through 3.

Discovery of Harmonicoccus

For those of you who missed the November 2004 installment of Monster Harmonica Workbench, I have included excerpts to bring you up to speed...

The other day my wife ventured into 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* ;o)

Warning

Exposing children to the explicit photographs of Harmonicoccus may be unadvisable that could lead to horrific nightmares. *For you parents out there, do you really want to add another distraction that will pull you away from your harmonica playing time?*

Tool List

- Ultrasonic Cleaner (M-M #82413)
- Cleaning Solution (M-M #81871)
- Toothbrush (1-800 Dentist)
- Small part brush (looks like a miniature bottle brush)
- Semi-Chrome Polish (various on-line sources)
- Wiha slotted screwdriver 260/3.0x60 (various on-line sources)
- Wiha PZ screwdriver 262/PZ1x60 looks like Phillips (various on-line sources)
- Sprue Cutter (M-M #15212)
- Emery Board (Beauty Supply)
- #6000g polishing pads (M-M #81601)
- 12oz Polyurethane hammer (Hardware Store)
- PVC Cutting board (M-M #36134)



Paw through your box of old harmonicas and select those that remind you of better times.



Note the build up of *Harmonicoccus* inside the holes of the mouthpiece and between the cover plate and comb.



Disassemble your harmonica.



With the reed plates removed, it is easy to see the disgusting view of *Harmonicoccus* caked onto, and around the comb.



Now is also a good opportunity to remove the unnecessary sprues from the comb. Not only will this increase the playability of your harmonica, it will simplify future maintenance by enabling tools to fit into the chamber. (M-M#15212)



A manicurist emery board works well to round off the square corners of the comb to improve comfort.



Here's a trick that I learned from my plastic model building days. Remove scratches and imperfections with a 6000 grit polishing pad.



Long time readers of *Monster Harmonica Workbench* know I'm a huge fan of opening the back cover plates to improve the voicing of the harmonica. Use a 12oz polyurethane hammer on a PVC type cutting board to impact roll the folds of the cover plates flat. This technique will produce dent free "factory" results.



Laying both *stock* cover plates on top of each other (without the comb and reed plates) reveals the excessive amount of cover plate “folds” blocking the back of the harmonica.



Now compare that with the modified cover plates. *If you can see more, the audience can hear more!*



Apply SIMICHROME Polish onto the tarnished surfaces of the cover plates.



Buff off the SIMICROME Polish and watch the tarnish disappear.

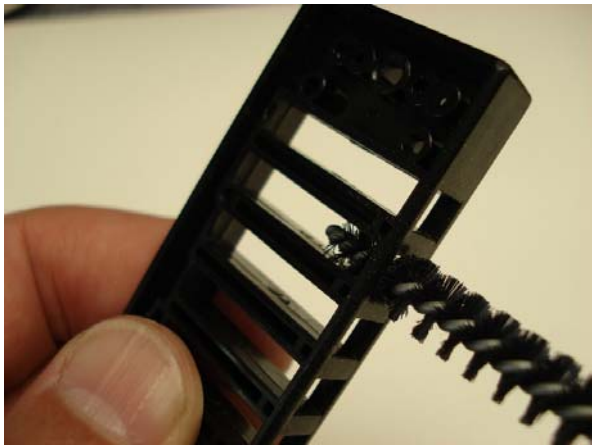
See how the *before* (left) and *after* (right) side of this cover plate has been restored to the original luster.



Place all the components into the Ultrasonic bath (M-M#82413) and mixed with Euro Sonic solution (MM#81871). Run as many cycles as necessary to soften and remove the Harmonicoccus



Brush clean. Like my Dentist always said, "Be true to your teeth and they won't be false to you."



With the sprues removed from the comb, the small parts brush easily slides in and out to remove debris.



See if you can guess whose celebrity harmonica player's hand this belongs to?

M-M part numbers refer to Micro-Mark, a supplier of small tools and materials. You can find them at www.micromark.com

Next installment, I will address the reed plates. So until then, beg, borrow or steal (maybe off the dance floor) those used harmonicas!

Play the notes that people want to hear[®]

Kinya Pollard
The HarpSmith