



I'm Stuck On You

“Monster Harmonica Workbench” with Kinya Pollard,
www.harmonicasesions.com

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Welcome back Harmonicats! The holy grail of harmonica customizing is to create an airtight instrument. And for good reason, because playing a leaky harmonica is akin to blowing up a beach ball with a hole in it... a lot of work with very little reward. So the goal would be to eliminate any leakage between the comb and reed plate surfaces. This will enable the player to efficiently channel their air into the reed chamber for maximum control and projection.

There are numerous strategies to achieve this objective. Admittedly, some of the techniques are more difficult than others... so, for this month's installment I will cut you some slack and demonstrate a simple strategy called the “no brainer.” This technique takes full advantage of the amazing gasket-quality of “Micropore” surgical tape, manufactured by 3M. Let's begin...

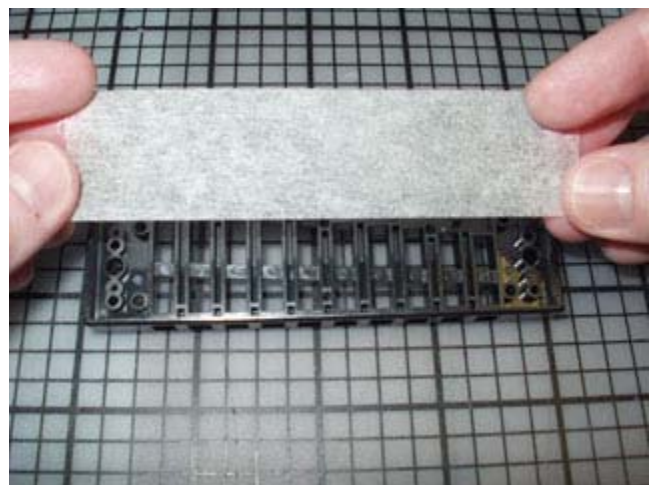
Tools and Materials

Use your tool kit from previous sessions, and include:

- 1” wide Micropore Surgical Tape made by 3M (Nexcare Gentle Paper)
- Single-edge razor or #11 Xacto knife

Procedure

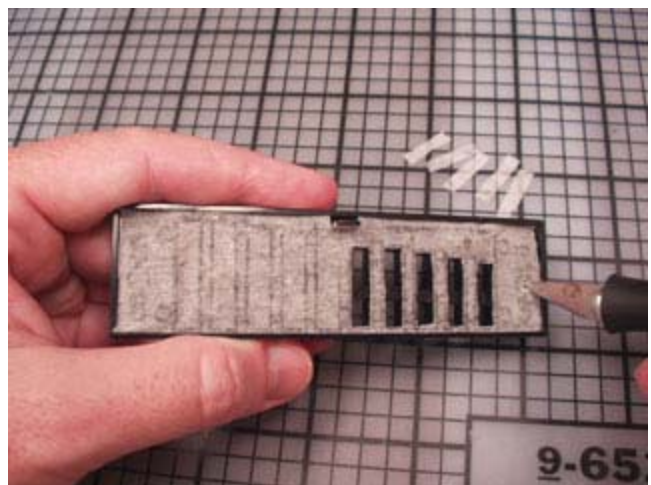
1. Disassemble the harmonica (mark blow and draw on the appropriate reed plates).
2. Clean the comb with a toothbrush and mild detergent.
3. Carefully align, then apply the sticky side of the Micropore tape onto one side of the comb (it makes no difference which side you start on).



4. Rub even pressure across the entire surface to ensure the tape will not lift off during the trimming process.
5. Using the reed slots as guides, razor cut and remove the tape from the interior of each slot (you'll have ten tiny strips of sticky tape per side after completing this process).
6. This part is a little tricky at first, but use your razor to poke pilot holes for the reed plate and cover plate screws. You'll be glad you did this come re-assembly time.
7. Repeat for the opposite side of comb.



8. **Option:** Prior to assembling your reed plates onto the comb, incorporate the gapping and tuning techniques you had learned from previous issues: "The Tao of Harmonica Customizing" and "Stop Those Dogs from Barking." This will maximize the performance of your instrument.



9. Re-assemble the reed plates (blow on top, draw on bottom) onto your modified comb. Use even and snug (don't strip!) torque methods on all the reed plate screws.
10. Re-assemble cover plates

Have fun with your new favorite harmonica!

Kinya Pollard
The "Harpsmith"