



A gentleman purchased this Saxophone at an Estate Auction with the hope of having it reconditioned and then either selling it as an investment or keeping it for his own enjoyment. I've overhauled a number of these over the years and they do seem to have value both to collectors and musicians alike.

Typically, Saxophones are in alternate keys of Bb or Eb. The Soprano is in Bb, the Alto in Eb, the Tenor in Bb, the Baritone in Eb. (Yes, they made a 'Bass Baritone' in Bb, and also a 'Sopranino' in Eb.)

Not everyone is that good at transposing to various keys, so the idea of a 'C' key Saxophone that could read the melody line was a great idea. And considering that a Saxophone has very similar fingerings to a C Flute, it did seem like a rather natural thing to happen.

By the 1920's these became VERY popular instruments. Typically, they had silver-plated bodies and silver/nickel keys and real mother-of-pearl inserts. Really beautiful instruments!

The only problem with overhauling them is that they need a LOT of work, well beyond what you would need to do for the typical overhaul/repad job of today's Saxophones.

The first challenge is just taking them apart. Usually the pivot rods and screws are rusted in place. That means you have to use some sort of 'corrosion-cracker' on every screw and let it soak in. Then very carefully unscrew and remove all those screws and rods. And since these older instruments were still undergoing the process of development, they really weren't made with the repair technician in mind.

To remove any key, you often must remove every key! So many screws and rods are inaccessible unless you remove something else, whereas today's designs usually give easy access to one or two particular keys at a time. No, these are 'all or nothing' Saxes.



If it only takes 2 hours to take it apart, you are doing great!

Next, you have the entire body that needs to be scrubbed and dipped in tarnish remover. But you can't just dip the Sax in a container (unless you have a massive container and a lot of remover), so that means scrubbing with a toothbrush that you keep dipping in the remover and rinsing with water once in a while. What is really nice is the immediate satisfaction in seeing results.

The Sax body, when done right, will look GREAT. I find that it takes a few different sessions of scrubbing before I get everything looking the way I want it. And of course the inside needs to be scrubbed with tarnish remover as well.



Next, the keys need attention. First job is to remove all the old pads. Depending on your preference, either an alcohol lamp or small torch works nicely. I use both, depending on how stubborn the pad might be glued and whether there is danger to parts or pearls on the pad cup.

Once all the pads are removed, then it is time for a dip. I used the same tarnish remover and rinsed very well and dried and put aside.

Then I buffed with a good-quality gold/silver buffing compound, similar to what you would use on fine jewelry. My personal preference is 'ZAM'. Then I use a Cold Cleaner solvent to remove the buffing compound.



Now you are at the place that most Saxophone overhauls begin. Everything done up to this point is rather unique to the work on an older instrument. From beginning to end you can overhaul/repad/recork an old Selmer Bundy in less than four hours.

A C-Melody will need at least twice that amount of time. Also, these older Saxes usually have more keys, parts, and pads than any newer ones. And the sizes? Nothing at all like current pad sizes. I have built up stock pad sizes in 1/2 mm sizes from 9 to 50, so I rarely have a problem matching anything. But even then, there are always a few surprises in store.





It is very important to pay attention to every detail. In this case, that meant dyeing the bumper felts green and re-corking the neck with real cork fit to the mouthpiece. I also reconditioned the original mouthpiece, using a scratch remover.



Finally, no instrument recondition would be complete without paying a bit of attention to the case. I always clean out the inside fabric and trim any loose threads. If musty, I have a spray that will freshen that as well. If the latches are in disrepair, then I even try to fix those. My belief is that every instrument leaving my bench is 'as best as I can make it'.





This 1921 Buescher C-Melody Saxophone has a new life. It plays great and I hope it finds a new home with a musician that will appreciate it. My job and time spent with it is finished.

Time for the next Project!