NAPBIRT 2011 - Off The Rails In Reno

Those of you who made it to the NAPBIRT show in Reno know already that there was a conspicuously empty table in the Exhibitors’ Hall with our name on it, and a good many of you may already have heard the story behind our exceeding “immobile” display. The fact is that we had a pretty remarkable set-up planned with a fantastic display and an amazing collection of new tools and supplies to show off and we were working on it right to the last minute when UPS picked up the crate (with every confidence and all assurances that it would arrive in Reno well ahead of us) and carried it off on its great, weakening, overloaded trek to the West. Ah yes, the best laid plans...

As it happened, the day before we were scheduled to fly out to Reno we got word from Cathy in the front office that the crate had been “held up” somewhere in rural Iowa because of “adverse weather conditions”. A few phone calls to UPS revealed that the crate had been loaded onto a train for the continental crossing but that the train had actually been blown off the tracks by high winds and was stuck in the middle of nowhere, too far from help to get the crate to Reno in time for the show. Needless to say...

First Touch

The concept of “First Touch” is one I’ve been using for many years as the best way to teach technicians about proper pad coverage. As any tech can tell you, most of us have been instructed to use a “tight touch” when examining and adjusting pad seals, but the fact is that the term is entirely subjective and impossible to measure. As I often relate it, most people have been instructed to use firm handshake when greasing someone, but shake a few hands and you soon realize that while some hands feel like they were soaked in milk first, others have you wondering if they crush rocks for a living. The point here is that, wherever I am, I like to use techniques that bring about reliably consistent results...no matter if you crush rocks for extra cash or not.

To take it out of the realm of the subjective I developed the First Touch concept and it goes something like this: whenever a key is depressed toward the tone hole, the first touch (the first point of contact) should be absolutely even and complete across the entire hole. No point of the pad should touch the tone hole before the entire pad touches down. This is equally true for linked keys. When one is making First Touch the other should be in contact at the exact same point. Following the First Touch rule is the surest way to guarantee consistent results in adjusting pads and keys for optimal performance no matter what kind of kung fu grip you bring to the job. For more information on this and other tips check out our helpful service guides, Servicing the Flute or Servicing the Clarinet, and stay tuned for our upcoming release of the new guide, Servicing the Saxophone. I promise, it’s on the way.

All the best,
J.L. Smith

Synthetic Cork For Joints

Our advanced synthetic cork sanding is the perfect material for replacing old and worn tenon and neck corks. The advantages of this engineered material are many, beginning with its greater resilience and pliability, which gives it superior sealing qualities. Synthetic cork doesn’t have any of the textural inconsistencies of ordinary cork so it saves time and there’s significantly less waste from working around material flaws. It’s also highly resistant to moisture and stands up to years of use without breaking down. We offer this useful sheet material in two styles, with or without peel-and-stick adhesive backing. We recommend peel-and-stick for musicians doing DIY repairs and suggest the plain sheets for use with high-quality Barge Contact Cement for professional technicians.

Technician Training

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If you’ve ever thought about a career in music repair or wanted to know how to fix your own instruments like a pro, J.L. Smith’s 4-Day Intro To Flute And Clarinet is a rare opportunity to study with true masters in one of the nation’s most respected shops. As the nation’s leading resource for advanced technical knowledge and instrument repair, we’ve taught the art of instrument repair to hundreds of people through educational programs and apprenticeships, and demand for intensive one-on-one training has continually grown. That’s why, for the first time ever, J.L. Smith is offering professional training programs for beginning and practicing repair technicians at our headquarters in Charlotte, NC.

Call 800.659.6073 or email jsmitl@jlsmithco.com to reserve your place.