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## **Care and Maintenance**

There are a few things you should know about the care of your guitar. Concert quality handmade guitars are more fragile than their factory built counterparts which need to be made heavier to hold up to the factory warranties. Treat the guitar gently, and never press too hard on the top or back of the instrument, particularly when fitting it into a tight case. Always press the edges of the guitar when putting it in its case.

I finish my guitars using a process called French Polishing. This is an application of shellac which creates a beautiful, sonically transparent, but relatively fragile finish. Never allow alcohol of any kind to come in contact with the guitar. Also limit direct skin contact with the instrument. Use long sleeves or a “sock” sleeve on your right arm when playing. Never leave the guitar case in direct sunlight, especially in your car, as the case fabric may react with the finish when it is warm. Although the finish is fragile, it can be repaired easily. Scratches are not a good reason to have your guitar refinished and cannot be filled without potentially damaging the sound of the instrument.

The neck is partially held on to the body with two bolts that can be seen on the inside heel block. Do not attempt to adjust these bolts. They are not adjustable and have nothing to do with the action of the guitar.

Many of the glue joints are glued with hyde glue, which can melt if exposed to too much heat and moisture. Keep your guitar cool and out of the sun.

Humidity is an important factor for the care and long life of a guitar. I build guitars at 50% relative humidity, and you should not keep your guitar in an environment less than 40% for an extended period of time. Keeping the guitar too dry may cause it to crack. In the winter months when the inside air is drier due to heating it is important to keep track of the humidity and adjust it if necessary. The best way to increase the humidity of a room is to use an evaporative humidifier available at drug stores or home centers. A Hygrometer (available at high quality tobacco stores) will allow you to keep track of the humidity in your room. Also, products like Dampits, available from music stores, can help keep your guitar from drying out while away from your home. Learn as much as you can about relative humidity so that you can anticipate problems. If your guitar does crack, let me know as soon as possible so we can arrange for me to look at it.

Clean your guitar often with a slightly damp cloth. A few times a year you can use something like Martin Guitar Polish too. If your fingerboard gets dirty clean it with a slightly damp cloth, allowing as little moisture as possible from getting into the wood, and then apply a very light coating of mineral oil to the ebony, then wipe off any excess. Wipe it off again in an hour.

Changing your strings often will keep your guitar sounding better and better as the years go by. If possible I recommend changing strings after about 30 hours of playing, but use your judgment. If the basses sound dull and “thuddy” change your strings. You will find that your strings sound better longer if you change them often. I use Savarez Corum/Alliance in normal tension, but feel free to experiment – you may like something different. Good strings at a reasonable price are available on line at [stringsbymail.com](http://stringsbymail.com). Music stores charge up to 100% more than many mail order companies.

If you have any questions or problems please let me know. I am happy to answer most questions by email or phone if you prefer, but make sure to call if you feel something may be wrong.

Enjoy!