

## *Saxophone Maintenance Tips*

- 1.** Examine all pads for splits and seating, including octave key pads. Replace as necessary.
- 2.** Check operation of the octave key. Finger G and operate the octave key. The pad on the neck vent should remain closed, the pad on the body vent should open and close. Finger A and operate the octave key. The pad on the neck vent should open and close, the pad on the body vent should remain closed. Lubricate if needed. If it still does not work correctly, consult a repairman.
- 3.** Finger middle finger C. Check that the little pad just above the first finger of the left hand closes. On Yamaha saxes adjust the left stack screw. On other makes a repairman must shim with cork or felt.
- 4.** Finger 1-4 and 1-5 Bb. Check for proper adjustment by depressing the Bis Key. Adjust at the setscrew just above the F pad.
- 5.** Finger D and work the G# key. The G# pad should remain closed and the tone should not change. If the G# pad opens even slightly it will prevent low C#, B, and Bb from speaking and prevent proper use of articulated G# fingerings. Adjust the G# setscrew.
- 6.** For advanced players: Check intonation of low Eb, D, C#, C, and B. Adjust the felt bumpers. Use a good tuner for this!
- 7.** If all else is O.K., doping the pads helps even on new pads! Old stiff pads are sometimes softened with pad dopes. Use the Lavoze "Pad Saver" swab. These two steps will greatly extend pad life, more than paying for the cost of the pad dope and swab.
- 8.** Lube the neck cork with cork grease, Chap Stick, or Vaseline. I use Singer Sewing Machine Oil on keys. Oiling the keys twice a year is adequate.
- 9.** Wipe the sax several times a week with a damp cloth and buff dry. Wax with Pledge several times a year, or spray with Runyon Lacquer Life. Silver colored keys on student line saxes are nickel plated and need no special care, just wipe clean.
- 10.** Never leave the reed and ligature on the mouthpiece when the instrument is stored. Wash the mouthpiece daily with lukewarm (never hot) water. At the very least, wipe dry with a tissue or cloth after playing. Use a brush if necessary--a Gerber baby bottle nipple brush works well. Soaking the mouthpiece overnight in vinegar will remove saliva stains. Keep a minimum of 4-8 reeds at all times. Keep reeds in a good reed holder such as Vito or Lavoze Reedguard VI. Never store your reeds in the plastic "Novapack" containers that reeds come packaged in. Never play the same reed two days in a row. Play reeds on a rotation schedule and they will last much longer. Wrap the mouthpiece and neck in soft cloths (old gym socks work well) or commercial neck and mouthpiece bags. Do not allow them to rattle around loose in the accessory compartment of the case. Mouthpieces are often damaged beyond repair this way.
- 11.** When transporting your instrument on the bus (or shipping) place bubble wrap in the case around the sax and accessories. Do not use a "Gig Bag" unless you are willing to hand carry your instrument at all times and hold it in your lap for trips. Compact "Flight Cases" are available that have minimum size and the strength necessary to protect your instrument. I can recommend the SKB Contoured Pro Sax Cases (my personal choice), the Winter Flight Cases, Pro Pac Contoured Cases by Pro Tec, and the Selmer Walt Johnson Gig Cases (used by the Air Force's Airmen of Note). These are all truly "roadworthy".