

Finish Care

by John LeVan

As always, I've received some great e-mails on the subject of finish care. So here we go!

One of the most common topics that I am asked about is how to take care of a guitar's finish. Finish care is very important and can keep your instrument looking new for many years.

Why does my finish look dull, scratched and hazy?

There are several reasons why a guitar's finish can become dull, hazy and just plain ugly. One reason is because the buildup of dust, sweat and whatever was on your hands before you played it. Another reason is regular use. The more you play the guitar, the more the finish can accumulate scratches from your guitar picks, watches, bracelets, etc. Over time, these funky afflictions can damage a guitar's finish and cause it to break down prematurely.

How to correct, and prevent premature wear & tear?

Prevention is the best remedy! It's more that just a cliché, it goes a long way to keep your guitar's finish looking new. There are a lot of products on the market, but only a few truly stand out. The Planet Waves Three Step Polishing system is one that I use in my shop here in Nashville, TN. Over the past 20 some years, I have used hundreds of different products the Planet Waves System has been the best thus far. It works great on anything from Vintage to Modern guitar finishes.

What makes the Planet Waves products work so well?

For one, they contain no silicone. Silicone can damage a finish because it prevents it from breathing, and quite frankly, it's a mess to work with. I have worked with polishes and buffing compounds with silicone and have never had a positive result. The other reason that the Planet Waves System works so well is that it's engineered specifically for guitar finishes. It makes the finish look new while allowing it to breathe.

There is a three-step process for cleaning, polishing and protecting your guitar's finish. There are few things that I recommend to have on hand before you begin.

1. **PLANET WAVES MICRO-FIBER POLISHING CLOTH**
2. **PLANET WAVES RESTORE FORMULA**
3. **PLANET WAVES PROTECT WITH PURE CARNUBA WAX**
4. **PLANET WAVES SHINE SPRAY CLEANER**

What type of polish cloth won't scratch my guitar?

The Micro-Fiber polishing cloth is the softest cloth I have ever worked with. For decades I have used old cloth diapers (not used on infants-LOL) to polish guitars. They are soft, but nothing like the Micro-Fiber cloth. The Micro-Fiber polishing cloth attracts dust, dirt, and oils away from the finish. Another great feature is that it lasts considerably longer than ordinary polish cloths. It is woven from microscopic fibers. In fact, it's 10 times finer than silk, up to 30 times finer than cotton, and 100 times finer than a human hair. These fibers are woven into tiny "hooks & loops". These "hooks & loops" cut through stains and smudges, and attract dirt and microparticles that ordinary cloths cannot. It's a good idea to have a few of them for each step of the process.

QUICK TIP! NEVER APPLY ANY KIND OF POLISH TO AN "UNFINISHED" FRETBOARD OR BRIDGE. UNFINISHED WOOD IS BEST CONDITIONED WITH THE PLANET WAVES HYDRATE FORMULA. IT IS SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR "UNFINISHED" OR "RAW" WOOD.

What's the process?

I use a very simple, three-step process. We begin with the RESTORE Formula. This works like a gentle-buffing compound to remove swirl marks and light scratches. I like it better than the commercial buffing compounds that I have used in the past because it leaves the finish clean and shiny, like working with a fresh canvas. Next, I use the PROTECT formula. It contains pure carnauba wax (commonly used on car finishes to restore their luster) and is a natural protectant and sealer. Restore combines premium-quality, #1 yellow Brazilian Carnuba and an advanced chemistry to produce a distinct radiance when applied. Finally, I use the Shine Spray to maintain that wet, glossy look. SHINE actually erases dust, fingerprints, and minor imperfections. It contains color enhancers to bring out your finish's beauty.

Step One:

Apply a little bit of the Planet Waves Restore to your Polishing Cloth and rub it on the body in a circular motion. This will help remove any swirl marks and minor scratches. After the polish dries to a haze, remove with a clean polishing cloth.

Figure 1.1 Planet Waves Micro-Fiber Polishing Cloth.



Figure 1.2 Planet Waves Restore.



Step Two:

Apply the Planet Waves Protect with your micro-fiber polishing cloth and rub it onto the finish in a circular motion. The Protect formula contains Pure Liquid Carnauba Wax, which when dry, will have a dull hazy look. This is a normal part of the process. Next, gently rub it off using a clean micro-fiber cloth and be amazed at how your guitar shines!

Figure 2.1 Planet Waves Protect Formula.



Figure 2.2 Use a circular motion when applying to finish.



Step Three:

Spray the Planet Waves Shine either on a clean Micro-Fiber Cloth or directly onto the guitar to maintain that wet look. Make sure you do the front and the back; and buff it till it shines. This will keep your guitar looking new.

Figure 3.1 Planet Waves Shine.



How often should I do this?

I recommend to thoroughly clean your guitar using steps 1 & 2 no less than every time you change your strings. Step 3 is good anytime you just want to touch up the shine. This process will help to restore, beautify and maintain your guitar's finish.

Thank you again for all of your great questions. Until next time, keep the music alive!

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For more information on the products, please visit www.planetwaves.com