

Ask-A-Luthier

Answers to questions on stringed instrument repair by Steve Mason

Question:

I have a Westerly-made Guild JF212-XL (I won it 6 yrs. ago - online pop-up giveaway). I initially kept it at standard pitch until I noticed the bridge lifting. I took it to Peek-A-Moose in NYC for authorized warranty repair. They reseated the bridge and recommended I keep it tuned down a step. It lives in its case most of the time. Should I keep it down a step, or can I tune to standard without ruining it? Or should I de-tune it while in the case, then tune to standard only when I am playing it?

My concern is that if I keep it at standard and it explodes, they might not honor the lifetime warranty (even though it has 2 truss-rods, etc.). What do you consider to be the best capo for this guitar? I've tried a Kyser, but can't adjust the pressure, which pulls sharp.

Thanks for your help - Don

Answer:

Your guitar was designed to hold 12 light gauge strings tuned up to **E A D G B E** or 12 medium gauge strings tuned to **D G C F A D**.

When a guitar is manufactured, the finish is put on and then buffed with power buffers. The bridge would get in the way of the buffers, so it is glued on later. The bridge is lined up by various jigs and all of the finish is scraped away from the spot where the bridge will be glued. Very commonly, not all of the finish gets removed. Glue will not stick to finish. A properly glued bridge will never come off. Yours was not properly glued. If Peek-a-Moose glued it on right, it should never again be a problem.

There is around 250lbs. of string tension on your guitar. Don't take it off and put it back on. The bracing, truss rods etc. are designed to balance the string tension. Wrenching the neck back and forth like that will mess with the adjustment and weaken the guitar. You said that your top is bellied up and your capo pulls the

strings sharp. I am going to guess that you need an action set and maybe even a neck reset. Guitar tops are not flat. When the strings are too far from the frets and the guitar is very hard to play, people notice, for the first time, that their guitar top is not flat. They think that the solution to their problem is to flatten that top.

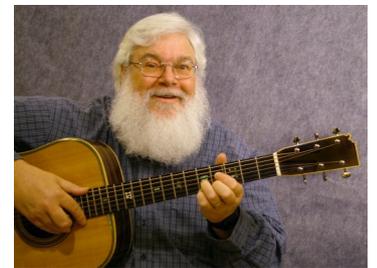
An action set straightens the neck, levels and rounds the frets and sets the height of the nut and the saddle. The strings should be as close to the frets as they can be, without buzzing, for your style. If the bridge is as low as it can be and the action is still too high, the neck must be taken off and reset at a higher angle.

Guitars tend to need a neck reset every 20 or 30 years. If your neck set is bad, it came from the factory that way. If the string is a long way from the fret, the capo has to "bend" the string down to the fingerboard, sharpening the pitch. An action set will help. There are lots of capos that can apply more grip than a Kyser. I like the Kyser. It provides plenty of grip, and it is very quick. When not in use, it clips to the peghead. If your fingerboard is very arched, the capo bar may not hold the outside strings down. Just bend the bar to fit your guitar.

About the author:

For a day job Steve is a luthier: one who repairs, improves and creates stringed instruments.

To make a guitar, he starts with a tree and carves away everything that doesn't look like a guitar. He plays fiddle, guitar, bass, mandolin and sings in the Alferd Packer Memorial String Band: alferdpackerband.com



Steve also maintains a wealth of information of interest to luthiers on his website: ask-a-luthier.com