

Creation of a New Finishing Technique

Background

Bob is now a great friend and wonderful guy I met by chance through an email link on my website asking about my process for building drums. I built my drums using Formby's Tung Oil and MinWax Gel stains (**DON'T DO THIS STICK TO ONE BRAND ONLY**) and he was going to be using the same process. Although the experience for Bob was disastrous through no fault of his own and the resultant friendship, which has developed, will last a lifetime and I feel blessed for getting to know him.

The Mis-Adventure

Bob started building his kit using the methods I used many times over the years with great success. The problem was that during this short two-year time laps between my build and Bob's, MinWax changed their formula making it now incompatible with the Formby's Tung Oil and it resulted in a totally blotchy finish. After multiple emails and finally calls to the MinWax company Bob finally found out that the blotchy patches were caused by nothing he was doing other than using the new "improved" MinWax formula with the old tried and true Formby's Tung Oil. They should put this warning on their cans somewhere and save people a lot of time and aggravation!

Now poor Bob had to sand off all the blotchy Tung Oil yet another time and start all over again! At this stage most of us would have thrown in the towel but not Bob! He was relentless in the pursuit of the perfect drum finish and spent the better part of the last year developing his own method using the MinWax products he had purchased which by the way through some trail and error is absolutely beautiful and simple! The resultant process is listed below:

The MinWax Method – By Bob Coirio

Hi Debi,



This recipe is ridiculously easy to follow as long as you take it step by step. The detail is extreme, not because there's anything complex about it, but because I want to leave absolutely no chance of guesswork. I practically tell you which hand to use to unscrew the cap from the can of Tung oil.

Between some advice I found on the Internet and a lot of dumb luck, I was able to produce a surprisingly good Tung oil finish on my shells and one drum-building professional has already asked for the recipe. Now, there's probably a

much easier, more efficient way to get the job done, so I won't say that mine is the best way to do it. It's just the method upon which I happened to stumble and if you should travel down that same meandering road, you should get to the same destination. This method makes dust and lint in the air a non-issue, so it's great for a workshop environment.

I used Minwax Cherry wood Gel Stain and Minwax Tung Oil Finish. I don't know if it will work with anything else. I do know you cannot substitute Formby's Tung oil for Minwax Tung Oil Finish -- I tried it, it didn't work. The Minwax Gel Stain is oil-based and the solvents in it are compatible with Minwax's version of Tung oil (which is really an oil/varnish blend). I used wet/dry sandpaper in the following grits: 220, 320, 400, 600, 800, 1000, 1200, 1500, 2000 and 2500. Grits from 1000 through 2500 can be gotten at an auto body supply store. You can also get 3M-brand #06334 masking tape in the auto body supply store. It releases, even after months, without leaving any residue at all. Of course, wear some kind of latex or vinyl disposable gloves and a respirator. I got one for thirty bucks at Home Depot.

I'll describe the finishing process in exhaustive, tedious, boring detail -- not to be annoying but to leave absolutely nothing to the imagination. If someone had done that for me, I wouldn't have had to strip my shells down to the bare wood three times (four, if you count the shell I messed up on the buffing wheel).

1.) Mask off the inside of the shell and bearing edges with butcher paper and 3M 06334 masking tape. Sand with 220-grit to eliminate the manufacturer's machinery marks on the wooden shell. Always sand in the direction of the grain. Use mineral spirits to lubricate the sandpaper so it will clog up less quickly. Finish up with 320-grit lubricated with mineral spirits. Wait at least one day before going on to the next step.

2.) Apply a moderately generous coat of gel stain as specified in the directions on the can. Let it sit between seven and ten minutes and wipe off the excess with cheesecloth, then buff the rest in with a lintless cotton rag. Always buff in the direction of the grain.

3.) Wait at least one day and repeat step 2. Then wait at least one day before continuing to step 4.

4.) Using a hunk of cheesecloth or a foam brush, apply a generous coat of Tung oil to the shell. We want this coat to sink in as deeply as possible to seal the wood and at least partially protect the stain therein from future sanding, so be generous with the Tung oil -- flood the exterior of the shell. Let it sit for ten minutes and then, in the direction of the grain, wipe away the excess Tung oil with cheesecloth. Return frequently to buff away the Tung oil bleed-back. As Tung oil cures, some of it will tend to squeeze itself back out of the pores of the wood and then harden as little pinpoint scabs unless you return to chase the little droplets away. Most of the bleed-back will take place on this first coat of Tung oil. If you don't happen to catch all the little droplets, it's okay -- you'll grind them away as there's plenty of sanding yet to do at relatively coarse grits. Wait at least one

day before going on to the next step.

5.) The next several coats of Tung oil are sanded in. This will keep your sandpaper from clogging up and it makes dust in the air irrelevant. Paint on the Tung oil with a foam brush or a hunk of cheesecloth. Sand it in with 400-grit wet/dry paper. Always sand in the direction of the grain. Wipe the excess away with cheesecloth (in the direction of the grain). There won't be quite as much bleed-back on this second coat, so just return occasionally to chase it away with cheesecloth. Wait at least one day between coats.

6.) Mix ten parts of Tung oil with one part of mineral spirits. We're thinning down the Tung oil with mineral spirits at this point because of the finer grit sandpaper. Tung oil that is too thick will allow the finer grit sandpaper to glide above the wood without cutting it. Paint on the Tung oil/mineral spirits mixture and sand it in with 600-grit wet/dry paper. Wipe the excess away with cheesecloth. Return occasionally to chase away any bleed-back. Always do your sanding and wiping in the direction of the grain. Wait at least a day between coats.

7.) Mix ten parts of Tung oil with one part of mineral spirits. Paint on the Tung oil/mineral spirits mixture and sand it in with 800-grit wet/dry paper. Wipe the excess away with cheesecloth. Return occasionally to chase away any bleed-back. Wait at least a day between coats.

8.) Mix ten parts of Tung oil with one part of mineral spirits. Paint on the Tung oil/mineral spirits mixture and sand it in with 1000-grit wet/dry paper. Wipe the excess away with cheesecloth. Return occasionally to chase away any bleed-back. Wait at least a day between coats.

9.) Mix ten parts of Tung oil with one part of mineral spirits (but if the sandpaper glides over the wood without cutting, add a little more mineral spirits to the mix). Paint on the Tung oil/mineral spirits mixture and sand it in with 1200-grit wet/dry paper. Wipe the excess away with cheesecloth and buff the rest in with a lintless cotton rag. Return occasionally to chase away any bleed-back. Wait at least a day between coats.

10.) Mix seven parts of Tung oil with one part of mineral spirits. Paint on the Tung oil/mineral spirits mixture and sand it in with 1500-grit wet/dry paper. Buff with a soft, lintless cotton rag until almost dry. If the buffing gets difficult or feels sticky, immediately apply more Tung oil/mineral spirits mixture and keep buffing until almost dry. Return to check for and eliminate any bleed-back with the lintless cotton rag. Wait at least a day between coats.

11.) Mix five parts of Tung oil with one part of mineral spirits. Paint on the Tung oil/mineral spirits mixture and sand it in with 2000-grit wet/dry paper. Buff with a soft, lintless cotton rag until almost dry. If the buffing gets difficult or feels sticky as you're buffing, immediately apply more Tung oil/mineral spirits mixture and keep buffing until almost dry. Return to check for and eliminate any bleed-back with the lintless cotton rag. Wait at

least a day between coats.

12.) Mix four parts of Tung oil with one part of mineral spirits. Paint on the Tung oil/mineral spirits mixture and sand it in with 2500-grit wet/dry paper. Buff with a soft, lintless cotton rag until almost dry. If the buffing gets difficult or feels sticky as you're buffing, immediately apply more Tung oil/mineral spirits mixture and keep buffing until almost dry. Return to check for and eliminate any bleed-back with the lintless cotton rag. That's the last of the sanding. Wait at least a day before the next step.

13.) Paint on a full-strength coat of Tung oil. Wait five minutes and then buff it in with a lintless cotton rag. If the buffing gets difficult or feels sticky as you're buffing, immediately apply more Tung oil/mineral spirits mixture and keep buffing. As the Tung oil starts to dry on the shell and on the rag, you'll be burnishing Tung oil with Tung oil, which is what you want. Buff until the shell feels almost dry to the touch. Wait at least one day before continuing.

14.) Repeat step 13 until the shell develops a high gloss (probably about four or five times). Let it cure a week before applying any kind of wax. A simple coat of automobile wax should do it.



The results are absolutely beautiful!

Thank you Bob for your detailed explanation of this process, your willingness to share it with the folks on the net and your wonderful friendship!

If you have any questions you may email me and I will forward them to Bob.