

Schantz foam rubber chest gaskets

For many years, the fine Schantz organ company used a foam rubber for the gasket material in the bottom boards of their chests. (Note: Cork was used for boards w/o actions) Over time this material solidifies where it contacts atmosphere and becomes very hard. This hardening unfortunately continues on into the foam material which can then cause dead notes across a primary or single note in unit action stops. The foam hardens on the outside, but can turn gooey and sticky inside the material, which can make for real fun in removal. While tightening the bottom board screws is an acceptable temporary fix solution in the field, ultimately the material has to be replaced.

Having performed this procedure a few times, here is what I have come up with.

Materials:

1 - Goo Gone Spray Gel: Of all the solvents I've tried to get the old foam off the bottom boards, this both works the best and has a pleasant citrus smell. It also doesn't drip or run, which is also good.

2 - Organ knife / putty knife / thin blade pocket knife

3 - Replacement gasket material: You can order new and non-deteriorating foam, pre-punched for the channeling from Schantz, or use something of your own choosing. (I've personally always gone the Schantz route; it's a real time saver.)

4 - Soldering iron / solder

5 - Vacuum

6 - Glue (of your choice for attaching the new gasket)

7 - Talc powder (optional)

Procedure:

First remove the bottom boards from the chest. You will probably need to unsolder the wires from the pins to get the board to an area where you can comfortably work. After removing the bottom boards, inspect the chest bottom for left over gunk, make sure and clean that away before replacing the repaired bottom boards.

Next, thoroughly soak the old foam with the goo-gone, allow it to soak in and try pulling up a corner. Ultimately when there is enough solvent and it has had time to work properly, the foam will pull right off the wood. This is where I like using my organ knife, to push along the surface of the wood to ensure the foam is coming loose as I attempt to pull it up. If the strip of foam should break in this step, be sure to have your vacuum handy to suck up any sticky little bits that might fall into a channel. It is rare to have an entire length of foam come up in one pass. Soak the bits that are still stuck to the wood with the solvent and then just scrape off with the knife.

Wipe down the now clean bottom boards with a rag and allow to dry thoroughly before attempting to attach the new gasket. Attach your new gasket material, allow

drying and prepare to reinstall. (Note: This is when I give the new Schantz gasket a little dusting of talc to ensure it has a barrier against sticking to any residual gunk on the bottom of the chest.)

Rewire the bottom board and then check for ciphers or dead notes. Even with the due diligence, stuff can always get into a channel when you have a bottom board down.

Bask in your good work and enjoy a libation!

Soli deo Gloria

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