



*Specializing
in the restoration of
vintage & professional
saxophones*

BARNARD
INSTRUMENT REPAIR

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THE BARE NAKED BRASS RESTORATION

The Aaron Barnard Bare Naked Brass Restoration is the ultimate expression of freeing a saxophone for maximum vibration. It enables an instrument to realize its full potential in terms of performance from the perspective of resonance and the quality of sound produced.

Unbridled sound with remarkable looks.

Everyone knows what a player's horn looks like. Lots of lacquer loss with big open patches of bare brass. They always seem to sound great. Professionals make their living with these horns. The Aaron Barnard Bare Naked Brass Restoration takes the "player's horn" to the next level. With no lacquer at all, the saxophone is liberated like never before. It comes to life with power and subtlety. It breathes in your hands. It makes it easier for you to get everything from the instrument.

After a Bare Naked Brass Restoration the saxophone looks fantastic. Almost like a closet horn. Except with a bare brass horn, there is no fear of scratching the lacquer. A simple application of furniture spray wax like Pledge on a soft cloth keeps it looking great.

What's wrong with lacquer?

Lacquer is applied to musical instruments for a couple of reasons. It makes the instrument shiny which looks great on stage. It also offers a first level of defense for the metal when confronted with the oils and acids in human fingertips and the adverse affects of saliva. But lacquer has the tendency to constrain the instrument as it "seals" it from the environment. Plus it is virtually impossible to apply lacquer in an absolutely consistent way, so some surface areas end up with more lacquer than other areas. This can have a negative effect on resonance. We all know how fragile lacquer can be. It can scratch easily and saliva drops can leave nasty spots in the darnedest locations. Sometimes vintage instruments show the scars of poor preparation with acid bleeds through the engraved areas of the horn.

The benefits of stripping.

The first step of the Aaron Barnard Bare Naked Brass Restoration is to remove any lacquer that exists on the entire saxophone. This has several benefits. It liberates the brass so it can move without restraint from the lacquer that used to imprison it. It also removes any inconsistency of lacquer thickness that occurred during its application. The benefit is that the brass now has the freedom to vibrate in an unencumbered fashion. It's a difference you can tangibly feel in your hands when you blow through the instrument.

It's important to note that our lacquer removal process is accomplished chemically. We do NOT use a buffing wheel. Period. This is critical because buffing wheels remove metal thickness and that can change the sound quality of the instrument. That is something to be avoided at all costs.

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Bare is beautiful.

The Bare Naked Brass Restoration also offers a cosmetic opportunity as well. Given that lacquer is no longer an element in the appearance of the saxophone, we have the ability to rejuvenate the surface of the brass and make it consistent across the entire horn. We can clean up any imperfections in the surface of the metal. Pitting can be arrested. Scratches eliminated or minimized. Acid bleeds become history. No nasty green patches. The metal looks almost brand new – like it was made yesterday. But with a marvelous patina that underscores its purpose.

Given freedom from the bonds of lacquer, we can enhance the engraving from a couple of perspectives. If it is worn thin, we can painstakingly “re-engrave” the original pattern. Sherry Huntley at Artistic Engraving does this for us and her work is superb. She has been engraving musical instruments her entire life and has refreshed many saxophones for Barnard Instrument Repair. Sometimes customers use this as an opportunity to add extra engraving to the instrument on the bow, back side of the bell and pad cups in order to take the horn to another level visually.

Eliminating tension.

The second major benefit of an Aaron Barnard Bare Naked Brass Restoration is paramount to all our saxophone setups. We do everything possible to eliminate tension that negatively affects resonance. We accomplish this through almost-countless nuanced steps. We fine-tune every post and rod so there is absolutely no binding or sloppiness. Things move with perfection. Smoothly. Effortlessly. Key guards are adjusted so there is no pressure required to install them and keep them in place. In some cases soldering is required to achieve this. With a bare brass finish, no lacquer is discolored and the finish remains consistent.

It doesn't stop there. Of course tone holes are leveled, pad cups are straightened and timing is set to the player's specifications. We use only the finest professional grade pads and resonators. The neck tenon and receiver are optimized as well as the ring on the end of the neck. The angle of the neck is checked against my extensive database of manufacturers' neck measurements. The neck cork is sealed with paraffin. In the case of some vintage horns, it may be desirable to move neck strap rings and thumb hooks to a more comfortable position. Key modifications can be fabricated, like adding a high F# key. This can all be done without leaving a trace or nasty scar.

Is it right for my horn?

Not all horns should be stripped. If you have a perfect closet horn with pristine lacquer, don't even consider this. Your horn has wonderful value the way it is and is a piece of history that shouldn't be touched. Some vintage horns sound absolutely amazing in their lacquered condition and they shouldn't be touched either. This is a wonderful treatment for player's horns or for horns that have been spot lacquered. Or for saxophones that have had lots of lacquer loss from dent repair or for instruments that simply just don't look good.

Give me a call at 319-364-4329 to discuss if an Aaron Barnard Bare Naked Brass Restoration is right for your saxophone. You can also see some examples on our website at barnardrepair.com
