

kmguitars

Body preparation and finishing.

The guitar build featured in the photos used here, are of a guitar I have recently built for my 10 year old granddaughter. The paint colours used and the design are hers.

Safety. Wear a mask, the disposal paper type are fine at this stage.

Okay the body is already sanded down to 600 grit, but because preparation is the key element in achieving a quality finish keep sanding. Use a block either cork or wood to give a flat even surface across the front and back of the body and always work in the direction of the grain. Using the palm of your hand to sand the edges is easiest and gives more control over contours, paying special attention to the inside of the horns and any end grain surfaces. It is easier at this stage to remove any imperfections, than fill and sand later. Now take a break, have a cup of tea. Being critical and patient at this stage will make a difference. Now look at the body from all angles to make sure none of the surface is missed. If you're really happy, let's go to the next stage.

If you have an ASH body we need to grain fill the timber, Why?. Ash is an open grain wood, these fissures need to be filled to achieve a nice flat surface. If you purchased one of the Ash PFKits the Rustins grain filler is included.

Safety. Wear gloves and mask.

With a cloth push the grain filler into the grain, going across the grain, try and cover the front or back in one go. Using a cloth wipe the filler with the grain to remove excess. Using a blade (see photo) scrape across the body to remove any filler left on the surface of the body. Before the grain filler is fully hardened, take a



Clean cloth and dampen with white spirit, wipe all over the body surface, it will remove the last of the surface grain filler. Continue same process for the rest of the body. Once hardened the grain filler is not easy to rub down, so removing as much as possible from the surface now, will make your life easier. Leave the grain filler to completely harden, check all over the body for any missed grain, and reapply if necessary. With the 600 grit paper sand down the whole body again, when you are totally happy with the surface, have another break and a cup of tea.

If you have a basswood body, removing any slight blemishes is relatively easy; being a soft wood any slight dings can be easily sanded out. If for any reason you do need to use the filler, use it sparingly, don't give yourself more work than you need to.

Safety. Wear gloves.

We now need to seal the body; we do this to stop the timber soaking up any primer and paint we wish to apply. There are various special sander sealers on the market, but an excellent all rounder is Unibond PVA; I have never had any compatibility problems with any kind type of topcoat I've used. It also has the added benefit of water proofing the timber so I use liberally in all the routings and neck pocket. Use a cloth to apply, working in circles, so you do not get ridges. I usually apply three coats.



Once dry (see photo) it has a shiny finish. Using 1200 wet n dry, lightly sand over the PVA, this dulls the surface and gives a key along with its adhesive quality for the primer. When your satisfied the body is complete sealed, have a break and a cup of tea. You might have guessed by now I'm a great fan of tea breaks.

Its at this stage I usually fit the neck (see neck tutorial), you will see why in a while.

Safety. WELL VENTITATED AREA, correct mask for spraying, eye protection.

We should be ready to apply the first coat of primer. First we have to mask off the neck pocket, try and do this as neat as possible. The two normal ways of supporting the body when spraying are either suspended by a wire through one or two of the neck mounting holes or attach a length of timber in the neck joint with a couple of screws. I find the latter, makes it easier to control the body, which



means you spray where you want to spray. The filler primer that comes with the PFkit works for two reasons, 1, primes ready for top coat, 2, the filler part gives you a bit of meat to rub down without going into the sealer.

Safety. WELL VENTITATED AREA, correct mask for spraying, eye protection.

Wipe the body down thoroughly with a tak cloth; we want a nice clean dust free surface. The first coat should be a light covering, just to get a look of colour. My process is, inside of horns, sides, edging, front and back. A more detailed description of spraying techniques is covered by another tutorial. Leave the primer until tacky usually about 10 minutes; we now want a decent coat of primer on the body. Take it steady we don't want to rush, but not to slow either, keep the can moving at all times, start spaying before you reach the body and go past edges before releasing the trigger. Once you have a nice coat of primer on the body leave for 24hrs to fully harden. You can either start on the neck or take some time out, which is a good idea.

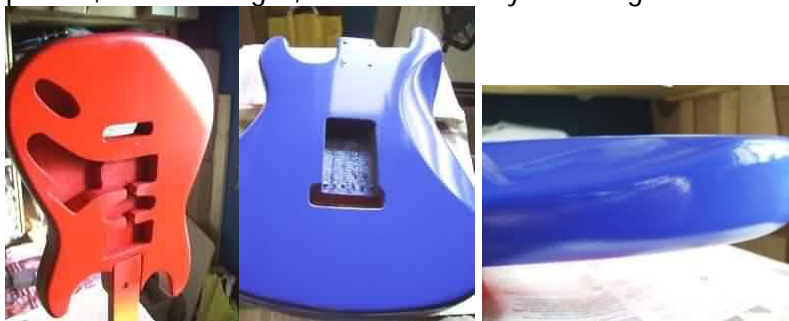
Safety. Wear a mask

We now have to wet n dry the primer, using 1200 grit paper and water with a little bit of washing up liquid, (helps to stop clogging) lightly sand all of the primer surface, again use a block on front and back. When nicely flattened out repeat the primer coat process, until you have a nice evenly coated flat body. I normally apply 4 coats of primer, leaving to harden between each. Don't forget to use the tack cloth each time before you spray, make sure you remove everything from the surface before starting to spray. Leave body to fully harden.

At this stage I usually drill the bridge mounting holes, see the tutorial that covers this.

Safety. WELL VENTITATED AREA, correct mask for spraying, eye protection.

Now for the first of our top coats. The process is basically the same as we covered for the primer, first coat light, and when tacky cover again with another coat



until we get to until the same position as the photos, four coats of colour (you will see why red and blue in later photos). Unless there are flaws in the last top coat I don't usually wet n dry the finish. We should now be ready for the lacquer.

Safety. WELL VENTITATED AREA, correct mask for spraying, eye protection.

Whether you are using gloss or matt lacquer its main purpose is to give protection, to the colour coats from you and the environment.

Follow the same process as the primer and top coat, do not wet n dry between coats unless there is a problem. Lacquer can be very forgiving if you get it wrong or it will be a complete nightmare and you will be flattening down between every coat. When lacquer spraying the front and back I try and get the body as flat as possible, then if I do over spray in any one area it usually levels out. Lacquer takes time to fully harden, so don't touch it any more than you really have to. Successive coats of lacquer will soften and blend into the coat below so you end with one solid thicker coat of protecting lacquer. I would normally leave the body to harden for 3 weeks in an airing cupboard before I would touch it again



These two photos show the finished body with copper shielding in place.

If I have missed anything or not answered your questions e-mail me at info@kmguitars.com, with your comment or question.

