

FRENCH POLISH

ORDER OF THE PROCESS:

1. Surface Preparation
2. Pore Filling
3. Applying the shellac (Properly called Bodying)
4. Burnishing the finish
5. Spiriting off

MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. Shellac (Preferably not from a can)
2. Non-hardening oil (Mineral oil or Olive oil)
3. Wool, Muslin, Fine Linen, and Cheese Cloth (You need all of these)
4. Very fine 3 or 4x Pumice

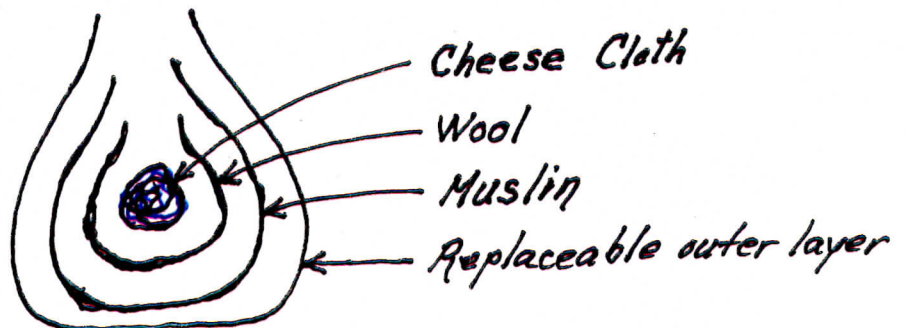
SHELLAC:

Preferable to use self made shellac, it is fresher and you can control the mix. Canned shellac is about a 3 - 4 Lb. Cut. You need no more than a one or two pound cut. This is not exact science, but rather thinner than thicker.

2 pound cut is 2 pounds of shellac in one gallon of denatured alcohol. About a 1:4 ratio. Easy and usable mix is; 1 (one) measure of flakes to 4 (four) measures of alcohol. If you grind the shellac in a coffee grinder it will dissolve much more quickly. Grind it after measuring.

THE PORE FILLING PAD:

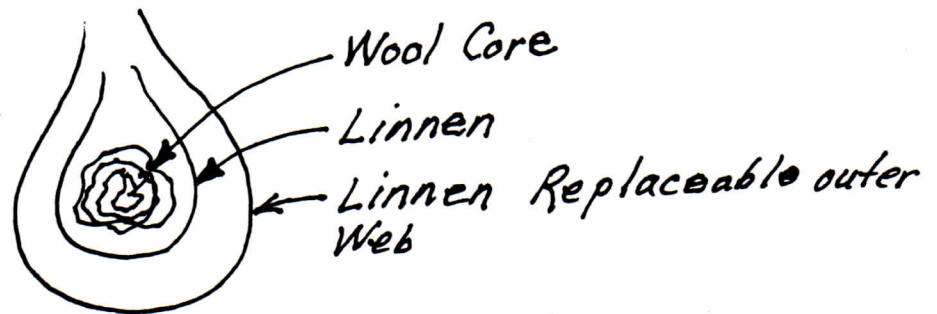
This pad will only be used for this purpose and it has four layers.



PORE FILLING PAD

THE BODYING PAD:

This pad will only be used for bodying, burnishing and some spiriting off.



PORE FILLING:

You will need the pore filling pad, alcohol, shellac, and pumice. The process is to dap a tiny amount of pumice evenly onto the surface. Take your pore filling pad and open it, from the back squirt enough alcohol into the inner core of cheese cloth to make it damp, and then add two to three drops of shellac. No more. Work the core of cheese cloth and wool to distribute the mix and then twist the pad together, holding it tightly in your hand. Begin moving as you touch down and using a series of circles and figure 8's, and straight movements, with moderate pressure grind the pumice into the pores. Do not stop moving until after you lift the pad off the surface. Concentrate on the corners and edges. Repeat as necessary.

BODYING:

You will need the bodying pad, alcohol and shellac. Open the pad and from the bak squirt enough alcohol into the core to make it damp. Then add about four to five drops of shellac. No More. Work the core to distribute the mix. Twist the pad up and hold it tightly in your hand. Begin moving before you touch the surface, Begin with small circles, then figure 8's, then various angles and straight line movements. **DO NOT STOP MOVING THE PAD ON THE SURFACE.** If the pad begins to drag lift off immediately. Wait for the surface to dry a bit, recharge your pad and continue. You can only add oil after the surface is sealed. When adding oil, add a very small amount, one or two drops. Bodying is done when you are satisfied with the finish.

BURNISHING:

This is done after you are happy with the finish. Usually this can wait until the next day to let the finish cure a bit. As with the Spiriting Off above, some burnishing takes place during the bodying process.

Burnishing is the pulling and stretching and hardening of the finish. This is part of what makes a French Polish so durable. This is done with the bodying pad, almost dry only so it feels a bit cold from the alcohol, but not even damp. You will do this fast and with some pressure. The heat from the friction pulls and stretches the shellac.

SPIRITING OFF:

This is the removal of any excess oils in the finish which will rise to the top. This is actually the final process, but some of it can be and is done during the bodying process. At the final process you can do with the bodying pad, or some soft paper towels dampened with alcohol, then crunched up and worked until the towel is very soft and almost dry to the touch but cold from the alcohol. Take the towel and lightly wipe it over the surface in the direction of the grain. Over lap the straight swipe and go over the entire surface.

SOURCES:

VIJAY VELJI: www.shellacfinshes.biz 3Excellent source for supplies, training videos, shellacs and advice.

You Tube: There are many videos, just type in "French Polish".

milburnguitars.com for a written description of their process for french polish.