

Resurrections – Extreme Guitar Repair

I repair guitars and I sometimes get to take an instrument that is dead – terminally ill – and give it new life. I prefer to own the instrument so that I can feel free and take liberties with the repair. These instruments are usually considered un-repairable and usable only for parts. I prefer old acoustic guitars, mandolins, etc... but electrics are fun to resurrect too. Here is an example.

Gibson Westerner Flat Top: Here is a picture of some of the damage to the top of the guitar. The black at the upper left is part of the pick guard. Note that the binding is in good shape. This guitar began its downhill slide when the owner decided to sand the top down a bit – because he heard that would make it louder – this is speculation on my part but it happened a lot in the 60's. Well they got carried away and sanded completely thru the top in a few places. To add insult to injury, they glued blocks of balsa wood to the underside of the top where it was sanded thru. They actually sanded the pick guard down too – ruined to boot. The “finish” they put on doesn't look all that good either. But the binding does look good ...



At some point the thing was considered junk and left out in the rain. The peghead still had the Gibson pearl logo and decorative inlay mostly intact but the black paint was flaking off the peghead. The guitar was considered scrap and was purchased for \$40 at a garage sale. Having successfully resurrected an old Kay wide body acoustic for the owner of this guitar, he asked me if I could fix it – and of course I said yes. My plan was to keep the top binding in place and install a complete new top into the existing opening – without replacing the binding. This is rather unorthodox but it worked fine. Don't try this at home.



Here is the whole top The ebony fret board and inlays can be saved. Nice binding



Here is what's left of the top after removal – some of the braces are re-usable.



The new top – solid AA Spruce and scalloped braces. Note the Center Brace “Bridge ”



Looks great, sounds great – not restored – resurrected. The bridge, rosette and pick guard are not “correct” Neither is the sunburst – but it sure is good looking and the customer loves it.