



# Microphone Choices:

## Paint-By-Numbers Protection

“At The Harmonica Microphone Bench” with Fritz Hasenpusch, Mel Bay’s HarmonicaSessions® eZine

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“Beauty’s only skin-deep.” Nice song, cool descriptive phrase/aphorism. However, in the realm of LORD MICROPHONE, that “skin” is key to preserving the mic’s delivery system (metallic casing) and the precious cargo within (the element or capsule) from the cruel world outside. That world includes—as we’ve seen in prior entries—the very essence of **us!** Yep, in many ways we are our microphone’s worst enemies. Beyond the incidental wear and tear we inflict on these sonic servants, there’s the corrosive nature of our own bodily fluids. Thank you, General Ripper...

We’ve seen how various metallic electroplated coatings can provide protection from the world outside, how Chromium and Nickel are good hard choices—literally—that can help preserve the integrity of the Zinc alloy castings that compose the grills and shells of so many of the microphones we’ve adapted for use in amplifying the TIN SANDWICH.

Other than electroplating, what are the practical choices? Once again, consider the purpose, workability, the wear factor, the environment of LORD MICROPHONE’S operation. For some background, take a look at the history of both the musical instrument industry and the auto industry. There was a time when the bodies of virtually ALL quality stringed instruments and fine furnishings were preserved with a coating of various organic resins. True “Shellac” containing “lac,” a resin exuded by certain insects (I’m NOT making this up), while true “Varnish” is derived from a tree found in Asia and referred to as the “Varnish Tree” ([\*Toxicodendron vernicifluum\*](#)). The processes involved were long-guarded secrets across Asia and the sub-continent. MODERN TIMES: In the 1920’s NITROCELLULOSE LAQUER was synthesized. By now there was no “Lac” in LAQUER. A very thin durable polymer coating, it had the advantage of very fast drying time due to the quick evaporation of its principal suspension vehicles, typically a mixture of several solvents such as [butyl acetate](#), [xylene](#), or [toluene](#). This in turn led to the development of the technology for spraygun application. Du Pont was a major player in the auto industry’s adoption of “Nitro,” where it endured into the ‘50’s with the advent of ACRYLIC LAQUER...

THE MODERN CANDY COATINGS! NEXT TIME WE VISIT...

THE MIC BENCH

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For pictures and descriptions of most of the microphones listed visit  
[http://www.harmonicamasterclass.com/vintage\\_collection.htm](http://www.harmonicamasterclass.com/vintage_collection.htm)