

# Tech Notes

By Paul Lusk

Every day Hohner technicians perform a variety of services, from warranty repairs to complete refurbishment, to returning harmonicas to playing form. One common issue we encounter is Foreign Object Damage or F.O.D. Borrowed from the aviation industry, F.O.D. refers to an object getting lodged in the small gap between the reed and the slot in the reed plate. Often this is dried moisture residue from previous playing. It can also be from putting the harmonica in a pant or shirt pocket where it can ingest pocket lint, small hairs or sand. Bigger F.O.D. can get wedged between the cover plate and reed plate. Our Technicians have found paper, coins and even guitar picks lodged inside harmonicas rendering them unplayable. So what does the player do?

Keep your harmonicas in a case. There are many cases available from Hohner, from

multi-harmonica briefcases to a single harp pouch. Cases are a barrier for foreign objects and the new soft pouch cases will often fit comfortably in your pocket. You can also loop the pouch onto your belt, thus keeping it handy for impromptu playing sessions. When you are finished with your instrument, lightly tap out any condensation that may have accumulated during playing so the moisture doesn't dry and interfere with reed function. If you find yourself with a stuck reed due to F.O.D. and can see the culprit, use tweezers to gently remove the offending item. Be careful to avoid making contact with the reed itself. If you must touch the reed to remove the item, use something non-metallic to open the space like a wooden or plastic tooth pick. As always, you can send your harmonicas to be serviced by Hohner's world-class technicians when necessary. Thanks for Playing Hohner!!

Cases are available from the **Hohner Service Department**. Simply call us toll free at **800-446-6010**, send an email to [harmonica@hohnerusa.com](mailto:harmonica@hohnerusa.com), or visit the accessories section of [www.hohnershop.com](http://www.hohnershop.com).

## Our CD Pick

“Allegretto/Espinoza”, a collaboration between musicians Gary Allegretto and Ian Espinoza, is an acoustic tour-de-force. Consisting of primarily original cowboy music, the CD showcases Allegretto's soaring harmonica, Espinoza's masterful guitar work, and a handful of special guests. Both musicians share lead vocal, composition, and production duties.

“Ian and I have been playing together for probably twenty years; he's been in my blues bands and recorded on my CDs”, says Allegretto. “We were always talking about doing an acoustic project together and were both fascinated by cowboy music because

of the connection with the blues that cowboy music has. He brought some songs to me that blew me away and I had a bunch of songs that I'd written, so the project is primarily original material.”



Fans of Allegretto's electric blues albums will warm to "Allegretto/Espinoza" immediately; his trademark vocal delivery, clever lyrical approach, and tasteful harmonica soloing remain intact. Allegretto's rollicking "First Rodeo" kicks things off and sets

the tone for the rest of the cd. "Kit Carson Blues" features Espinoza's virtuosic fingerpicking on a 1929 National resonator guitar previously owned by iconic Delta

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## In The Studio

with Charlie McCoy



By the time Charlie McCoy was invited to participate in sessions for "The Boxer", Simon and Garfunkel's landmark 1968 recording, the harmonica giant had also come to be associated with an impressive array of other instruments, including guitar, trumpet, keyboards, and bass, among others. "They asked me if I had a bass harmonica that I could bring to the session", he recalls.

Though best known for his mastery of the diatonic harp, McCoy was able to accommodate the request, despite the unique technical demands of the bass harmonica. Charlie's contribution to Paul Simon's timeless classic became one of the most widely known examples of an instrument rarely heard in pop music.

"Paul Simon really is a genius - he knew exactly what he wanted me to play. Playing the bass harmonica is totally different; it takes a lot of air and sometimes the parts require a lot of jumping around to get to the notes. My part was really just one note!"

Equipment used: Hohner 265/58 Double Bass harmonica

[www.charliemccoy.com/](http://www.charliemccoy.com/)

# artist spotlight

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them. It's something that's musical, but also cultural, spiritual, and religious.

"There's something innately moving and emotionally compelling about the sound of this instrument. The diatonic harmonica has this organic sound quality...it's kind of miraculous."

"Of course, I read a lot, so there are certain books that give me concepts about physics and science that make me think differently when I'm playing. Even reading some science fiction books can inspire me. Sometimes if I'm out on a beautiful day, I'll just be inspired to write a melody. And, of course, love –that's a big one!"

An experienced educator, Levy was nonetheless a bit skeptical when approached about teaching online. "I wasn't sure originally, because of the invisible nature of the harmonica. You can't show people finger positions like on a guitar, piano, or violin; I wasn't sure it could work. I am here today

to say that it does work! I am incredibly proud of this school. I have hundreds of students from all over the world, and it's the first time I've ever taught every level. I get such a kick out of seeing people improve from one week to another."

"There's something innately moving and emotionally compelling about the sound of this instrument. The diatonic harmonica has this organic sound quality...it's kind of miraculous; it sounds so alive. That's what's driven me, really – the sound of the instrument and the effect it's had on me and the people listening."

## Our CD Pick

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bluesman Bukka White, as does Espinoza's "Hard Times."

"Hard Times" also presented Allegretto with the opportunity to record with a bass harmonica for the first time. "I had one and was kind of intimidated by it," says Allegretto. "I tried it, just playing a very basic bass line with the harp. It's all blow notes and nothing like playing a regular diatonic harp. We liked it so much that I also played it on a song called "Cowboy Waltz", a traditional song that Woody Guthrie also re-

corded. It's just cool; I love the sound of it."

"I try to use the harmonica to serve the song. On the vocally oriented material, the harmonica is there to accent the storytelling. On the instrumental 'Cowboy Waltz', I play in first position; the song comes from the 1800s, and first position playing captures the Civil War-era sound. On 'Cripple Creek', another traditional song that I play, I cut loose a little bit instrumentally. I play washboard on it, two harmonicas, a tin cup, and a Jew's harp. We had a lot of fun with

that one".

"The first time we got together, Ian was playing Blind Blake and Mississippi John Hurt on the guitar, which blew me away. He draws on the blues and I draw on the blues. Because of the crossover between blues and cowboy music, there's really not a lot of difference".

"Allegretto/Espinoza" is available at <http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/allegrettoespinoza> and [www.garyallegretto.com](http://www.garyallegretto.com).

## Make Music Foundation - continued from page 2

public. Two of the caveats to being sanctioned by the official Fête de la Musique organization in Paris are that all concerts must be free to the public, and all performers donate their time for free.

Hohner donated harmonicas to each of the

US city organizers who are coordinating group harmonica lessons for aspiring musicians. "It is truly amazing how this event has grown since its beginnings," commented Drew Lewis, Harmonica Product Manager. "This mass celebration brings communities closer together through

music. Hohner supports music-making activities whenever and wherever we can and we're proud to be able to participate." These events will be held in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Denver, Madison and Portland ME on June 21st 2013.



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