

ASSEMBLING THE BRANDONI CUSTOM GUITAR KITS

The Brandoni guitar kits are relatively easy to assemble using just normal domestic tools. A small amount of soldering is necessary but as much as possible has been pre-wired.

The body and neck need to be treated by the method of your choice. You can use French polish, oil, wax or lacquer. An excellent finish can be achieved with careful use of car spray cans providing they are applied and buffed correctly. Many are cellulose based and similar to commercial guitar paints. In recent years a range of acrylic car lacquers has become available that are cheap, easy to work with and do not react to other types of lacquer.

The bridge position on the guitar bodies has been pre-drilled so the various bridge assemblies can be easily attached to the body and the neck fitted. You can sight a centre line through the middle of the neck from headstock to bridge and bolt the neck on. I prefer to fit a pair of strings, top and bottom "E", and make sure the distance to each edge of the fingerboard is correct on both sides. The neck can be adjusted in the pocket until satisfactory and the screws then tightened.

When completing the electrics make sure the earth lead is run to the tremolo claw on the Stratocaster or the right hand tailpiece post on the Les Paul. The Telecaster bridge is already earthed via the pickup lead. The only wiring necessary on the Telecaster is to connect the two white wires from the pickups to the linked tags on the selector switch and the two black wires to the chassis of the volume pot, by soldering. The Stratocaster jack socket needs to be connected once the wires are run through the body. Make sure these are live to tip, earth to sleeve on the jack socket. A lot of people make a mistake here by reversing these connections causing hum and noise when the instrument is plugged in.

To complete your Les Paul it is necessary to do some additional wiring in the control cavity. Making sure you have already run the black earth lead to the tailpiece bush, assemble the four potentiometers which are linked together with earth braid. Run the selector switch lead through from the switch cavity via the pickup routes to the control cavity. Connect the red and white leads to the centre tags of each of the volume pots. The screen is soldered to the chassis of a pot and the remaining black lead from the switch joined to the jack socket lead, soldered and insulated. The pickup leads are now run through the body and the live lead from each connected to the respective volume pot at the same tag as the tone control. The screens from the pickups are soldered to the chassis of each volume pot. The instrument is now ready to be tested. Plug in and gently tap the pole pieces with a small screwdriver to check that both neck and bridge pickups are working and that the switch has been installed the correct way round. Finally check that the controls function as they should.

When all the hardware and relative components have been installed the final job is to set up the neck, nut and string intonation. You can use nut files in various string gauges but a much cheaper alternative is a junior hacksaw blade filed down at one end for the .009 or .010 strings, using the thicker end for the rest. Take down any excess bones on the nut so that the strings sit in the slots cut but do not sink in.

Insert some type of metal spacer such as Stanley knife blades between the nut and the first fret to prevent any slots being cut too deep. Some makers leave the string slots higher than the first fret at the nut but I prefer the height to be the same as if the nut was a zero fret. This means the guitar is more comfortable to play and tuning is not compromised in the lower "F" and "Bb9" chord shapes.

Intonation for each string has to be set at the bridge by the adjustable saddles. Play a harmonic at the 12th fret and fret that note and play again. They should be the same pitch. If the note is sharp, move the saddle away from the neck to make the string length longer. If it is flat, move the saddle closer, shortening the string.

The gauge of strings used, the playing style and personal preference all affect the action. Start by setting the truss rod to give a straight neck when the guitar is tuned to concert pitch. You can then give some slight relief to the neck by loosening the truss nut a half turn or so. A convex bow in the neck indicates some over-tightening of the rod, a concave bow means the rod is too loose. I prefer to set the neck straight with no relief and then lightly stone the bass side of the fret board to put some relief between the 1st and 14th frets. This "cleans up" the more pronounced movement of the lower wound strings and yet enables a low, fast action in the treble area.

When fitting the strings do not forget to take all the string slack from the machine head posts so the tuning is stable. Tune each string to pitch and then pull hard, retune and pull until the string no longer slips. Don't pull too hard as you will break your strings! Modern machine heads do not slip. When guitars go out of tune the cause is usually strings slipping round the posts or sticking in the nut and string tree. The machine head often gets the blame.

If you have any problems or questions concerning your Brandoni kit give me a ring,

Allan at (020) 8908 2323. Best of Luck!!