

As Seen on GuitarGearHeads.com, February 2010



Living in the Pacific Northwest as I do, you would think that acoustic guitar humidification would not be as big of an issue as it is in dryer climates. In the area where I reside, many people use wood heat, which is a very dry heat. The point is that the conditions of a residence where a guitar spends its time may not reflect the environment of the weather patterns. I recently heard a story of a guy in this area who was given a beautiful Taylor acoustic that had been in a case in his boss's closet for about ten years. The aged wood of this guitar had beautiful tone, but the neglect of proper storage over the years had made the wood extremely dry and brittle. One night his strap failed and he accidentally dropped the guitar on the floor. In a normal situation like this, the guitar may have sustained some damage that could have been repaired, but in this case, the condition of the wood caused the body on this particular guitar to shatter into little pieces.

The point of this sad but true story is that no matter what climate you live in, having a humidity control system for your acoustic guitar is a good idea. I recently received the Humidipak Humidity Control System from Planet Waves. The box contains two pouches and three Humidipak refills. To use the system, you simply place two of the Humidipaks in the double pouch which hangs in the soundhole over the two middle (G and D) strings like saddlebags. The third Humidipak is then placed in the single pouch and placed in the case under the headstock of the guitar, and you are good to go.

The Humidipaks are also designed to work as a two way system meaning that not only do they release moisture when needed, but they also absorb moisture when there is too much. They have been scientifically formulated to keep your instrument at a constant 45% relative humidity when stored in a sealed environment such as the case. The best part is that there is not maintenance on your part like there is with systems that require you to add water and constant monitoring. Once the system is set up, you should not need to worry about it for two to four months or until the Humidipaks become hardened. At this point, you will need to buy replacement packs and change them out. I should point out that you should leave the Humidipaks in the closed case even when the guitar is not present. This will extend their life since they will not be working on the humidity on the entire room.

I tested the Humidipak Humidity Control System on my Alvarez Masterworks acoustic guitar. The case that came with this guitar has a built in hygrometer, making this the perfect environment to test the accuracy of this

system. I was not sure what kind of accuracy to expect, so I made a decision that if the Humidipak system could maintain a relative humidity of +/- 3% from the 45% mark, I would be more than satisfied.

I took a reading of the humidity level of the case before putting in the Humidipaks and it was a 57%. After two days I opened the case to get a reading. The interior of the case was now reading approximately 47% relative humidity. Over the next three weeks the weather went through a few days of heavy rain, followed by about a week of sunshine and then more rain. The outside temperature ranged from 36 to 50 degrees, but the inside temperature remained constant between 65 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit. During this time I took multiple readings and found that the relative humidity level in the guitar case giving me a +/- 2% of the 45% goal. All subsequent readings afterward maintained this standard making this the most accurate and lowest maintenance systems I have ever seen. In fact, you would be hard pressed to get this kind of control out of a system that you were monitoring on a regular basis.

The only down side that I can see to this product is the cost of continual use. The replacement packs cost almost \$7.00 each, meaning that every two to four months, you will be making a \$21.00 investment in the system. It's not a huge amount of money, but if you consider a years worth, you are looking at an \$84.00 - \$168.00 investment for each guitar with which you utilize the system. Most will want to figure out of if the value of the guitar being protected is worth this peace of mind.

All in all, I would recommend this system for anyone with a guitar that they place high value upon. It will extend its life span indefinitely while keeping it sounding its best for many years to come. I am more than happy to give the Humidipak Humidity Control System the Rig Ready Award for 2010.



Pros Low maintenance, easy to use, consistent humidity levels

Cons Ongoing cost of use

Street Price \$27.99 for full system with three Humidipaks.

\$6.99 Each for replacement Humidipaks

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