

# Combatting Counterfeit Musical Instruments

In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in the amount of consumer goods being counterfeited around the globe. Many people have heard of counterfeit handbags, shoes, or clothing being sold, but how many of you know that counterfeit musical instruments are also being produced? These counterfeit products, regardless of type, cost the manufacturers millions of dollars and many workers their jobs.

Purchasing a counterfeit instrument is comparable to illegally downloading a song on the internet. The composer doesn't get paid for their work, nor does the music producer, the production company, or the artist. In the case of the counterfeit instrument, there has been copyright infringement, and the design of the instrument has been stolen. Also, the instrument has been manufactured with substandard materials with no quality control in regards to the production criterion, and the company that designed it does not receive proper compensation for their work.

Musical instrument manufacturing companies, like the Henri Selmer Paris Company, spend a lot of time and money promoting their brand throughout the world. They carefully craft how their company image is perceived by the public and how their product is viewed and received by their customers. When counterfeiters begin changing certain aspects of the instrument design, such as the lacquer color or type of finish, consumers in the marketplace

may get confused, thinking that the company itself is actually offering a new product. This could potentially have negative effects for companies like Selmer Paris, if those "new products" are not well received. Therefore, the manufacturers take action to ensure that these counterfeit products never reach the market, and that the general public is well educated about the differences between legitimate and counterfeit goods.

The Henri Selmer Paris Company is the undisputed leader of professional saxophones and mouthpieces. It is an independent, family-owned company that manufactures instruments in France while maintaining exceptional quality. Recently, Selmer Paris launched a campaign on Facebook in order to further educate their fans and consumers about the differences between legitimate Selmer Paris saxophones and counterfeit saxophones that they have discovered.

The campaign includes side-by-side photographs of legitimate Selmer Paris saxophones and a counterfeit. By educating the general public about how to spot a counterfeit good, the Henri Selmer Paris Company is narrowing the market in which these faux goods can be sold and assisting their customers by keeping them from being duped by counterfeiters. It is being published in both French and English so that the Henri Selmer Paris Company will be able to reach their international customers.

When attempting to determine whether a Henri Selmer Saxophone is legitimate, first look at the finish of the instrument. Selmer Paris produces saxophones with six different finishes, and, unlike some other saxophone manufacturers, they do not produce saxophones with jewel-toned lacquers. You will not see a red, blue, green, or purple Selmer Paris saxophone, so a saxophone with that type of finish is a dead giveaway that it is a counterfeit.

Looking at Figure A, the Selmer Paris "Reference" model is available in two different finishes, the Antiqued Lacquer (left) and the Dark Gold Lacquer (center). The "Reference" model is not available in the black lacquer (right), and the one shown is a counterfeit.

The finish of the instrument is only the first step for determining the instrument's legitimacy. Look closely at the engraving on the bell of the saxophone, and compare the brand mark, model, and any other distinguishing marks on the instrument against a verified photograph of a Selmer Paris saxophone. The Henri Selmer Paris Company has many photographs of their instruments on their corporate website at [www.selmer.fr](http://www.selmer.fr).

As you can see from Figures B & C, the first indication that these are counterfeits is the purple and red lacquer. Upon closer inspection of the engraving, "Henri Selmer Paris" is written in a different font, "Made in France" is in a

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FIGURE A: A comparison of actual and fake finishes of Selmer Paris instruments.

# A CLOSER LOOK

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FIGURE B



FIGURE C



FIGURE D

larger font, the laurel leaves are changed, and the trademark symbol is significantly larger than the original. In addition, on the fake model, in the "Reference" engraving, there is an additional loop added to the "R."

In this next example (Figure D), in the brand mark, "Henri" and "Paris" are missing. The trademark symbol is significantly larger than the original, and in the "Reference" engraving, there is an additional loop added to the "R." The laurel leaves are also different. In general, the proportions for the engraving are different than the ones on the original. One additional problem with this counterfeit is in regards to the finish – while Selmer Paris does produce a silver saxophone, this instrument appears to have a matte silver finish similar to the Antiqued Lacquer. A matte silver finish is not offered by the Henri Selmer Paris Company and indicates a fake.

In this example (Figure E), the counterfeitors changed the brand mark significantly. The fonts are larger and completely different, the laurel leaves are open in the middle, and the trademark symbol is missing. There is an addition of the words, "Selmer" and "Made in France" on the fake model. The model number is missing from the counterfeit as well, and the lacquer color is darker on the fake.



FIGURE E



FIGURE G



FIGURE F

On this example (Figure F), the fake model is missing "Henri" and "Paris." Under the laurel leaves instead of a trademark symbol, there is the word "Selmer." The laurel leaves are different on the fake than the authentic model, and the model name and number are missing. All of the fonts on the fake instrument are incorrect as well.

Some counterfeits are better than others.

With those, you need to look at all of the details in order to spot the fake. In this example (Figure G), the finish utilized by the counterfeiters was one used by Selmer Paris, and if without a photo of a real Selmer Paris saxophone to compare the logo against, upon first glance, the logo might pass inspection. However, the big mistake is in the "Reference" engraving, because there is an additional loop added to the "R."

When purchasing a new Selmer Paris saxophone, there are two more areas to check for authenticity. First, look for the color of the felts used on the key guards (Figure H). The Henri Selmer Paris Company only uses black or green felts, not red. Therefore, if you see a new Selmer Paris saxophone with red felts, you can be sure that it is counterfeit.

However, it must be noted, that if you are looking to purchase a used Selmer Paris saxophone, you cannot determine the authenticity of the instrument solely based on the color of the felts. Occasionally, band instrument repair technicians do replace guard felts on instruments with different colored felts, so if you are purchasing a previously owned instrument, it is possible that you are purchasing an authentic instrument with red felts. In that case, you need to check the other authenticity indicators such as the finish type and engraving to determine whether it is real or fake.

The final item to check is on the neck of



FIGURE H

the saxophone. On the octave key, there is the distinctive "Selmer S" design. If that is missing, you have a counterfeit.

Whether you are looking to purchase a Selmer Paris saxophone or another musical instrument, it's important to verify that you are purchasing something authentic. You can apply the lessons learned from this article to any situation:

- 1. Check the finish of the instrument.** If the company did not manufacture an instrument with that type of lacquer or plating, it is counterfeit.
- 2. Compare the engraving against photos of authentic instruments on the manufacturers' corporate website.** If the engraving is wrong, it is also counterfeit.
- 3. Verify that the felts on the new instrument are the correct color.** If a new instrument has the wrong color felts, it is counterfeit.
- 4. Check the instrument for other distinctive brand marks.** If there are supposed to be some, but they are missing, then the instrument is counterfeit.

Join the fight against counterfeit musical instruments! Help us eliminate them from the marketplace, and refrain from purchasing them. Finally, thank you for supporting our major musical instrument manufacturers, both in the United States and abroad. 

— Heather Davis, Editor