



Oiling Valves and Rotors

By Ken Skitch

Valve and rotor oil serves two main functions. First it is a lubricant that has been specifically developed to work with the materials in a musical instrument under the typical usage and conditions of playing. We recommend only oils that have been designed for use on musical instruments be used.

The second function of oil is to serve as a cleaner for the valves. As the instrument is being played, moisture from the breath (saliva) condenses inside the instrument. Saliva contains a mild form of hydrochloric acid that can harm the metals in your instrument. There are also minute pieces of food and organic material being blown into the instrument during playing. All this works its way into the valve section and if left to build up, will fill the small tolerances between the valve and casing, causing the valve to slow down or prevent it from working. Oil keeps the valve and casing areas of your instrument clean of debris and saliva acids.

For petroleum oils we recommend the use of Blue Juice Valve oil, Yamaha oils of any kind as well as Holton products. They all perform well, especially in instruments with monel pistons. Monel pistons require a very diligent oiling and cleaning regimen.

In the past few years a variety of synthetic oils have entered the market. Use caution when trying new oils. Some synthetic oils when mixed with petroleum-based oils will create a bond agent similar to Elmer's White Glue. This will bond the valve to the casing and can be very costly to clean up to restore the valve action. Heid Music's Repair Department highly recommends Hetman products. Their synthetic ingredients will mix with any petroleum oils without any adverse results.

For Piston Valves: We recommend that piston valves be oiled at least once a performance. To properly oil them they need to be removed from the casing and oil applied directly to the piston. DO NOT apply oil thru the hole in the bottom cap. This will only wash the dirt collected in the bottom cap back onto the piston and stop your valve from working.

For Rotors: We recommend that rotors be oiled at least twice a week. There are two types of oils to be used on rotors. Spindle or bearing oils are to be used on the two bearings of each rotor. Rotor oil is to be applied in the main body of the valve thru the tuning slides. (See diagram for locations) Do not use valve oil in rotors because it is too thin a consistency to stay on the surfaces and serve its functions.

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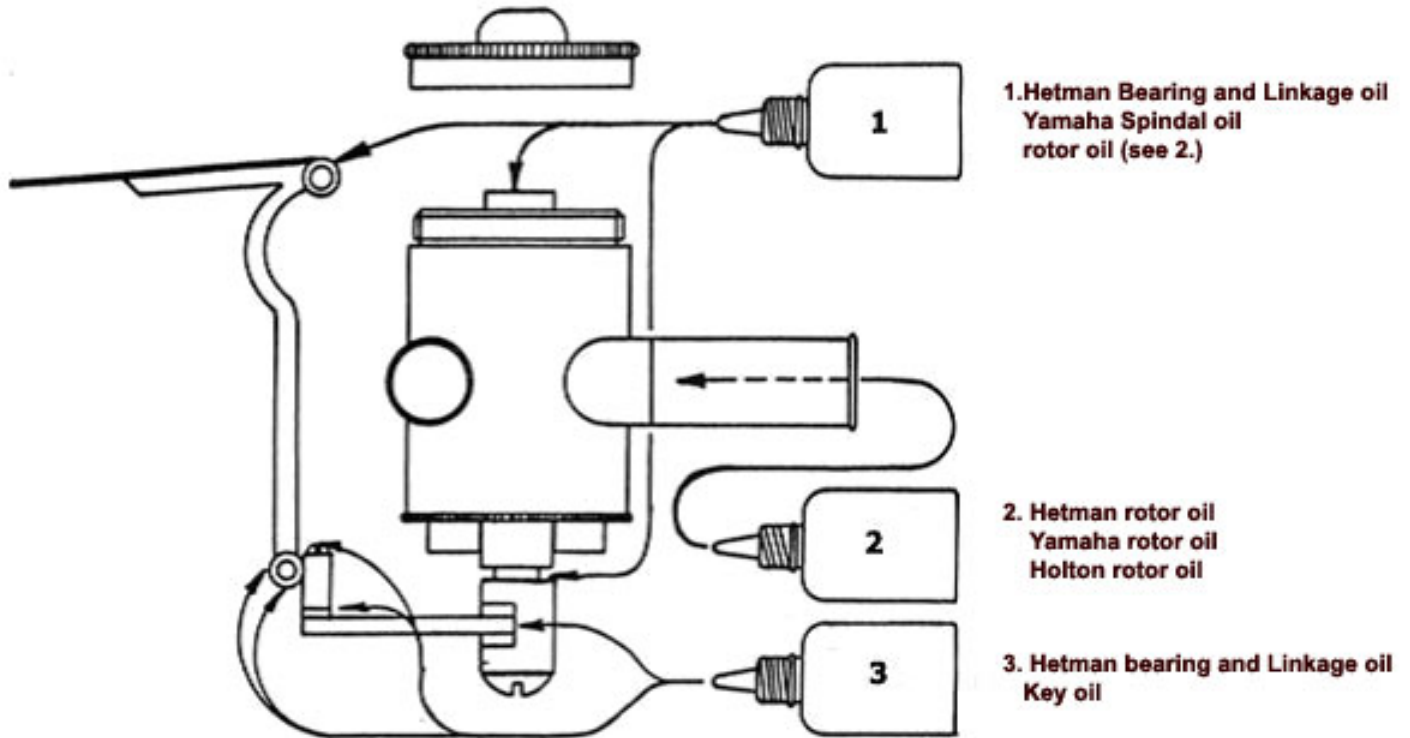
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