String Gauges and their effect....

by **DasBeef** » 22 Mar 2012, 09:39

I've recently strung my Guild S-100 with gauge 11 flat wound strings. As much as I like the heavy gauge, and the flat wound goodness, I am not enjoying the difference it has made to the guitar. The action seems to be quite a bit higher. I have been playing guitar for a long time, but when it comes to set ups, neck adjusting and such likes I am a complete and utter newbie. I know nothing of this. So my worry is....
Are these heavier gauge strings putting too much tension on the neck?
Or, is it much simpler...
As these strings are heavier, and the guitars been set up for gauge 9's or 10's, are the 11 just thicker, and therefore sitting higher?

I basically want to know if I should remove these string immediately?

Also, do you get flat wound gauge 9's or 10's? I couldn't seem to find any.....

EDIT: Just found THESE

DasBeef

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **natthu** » 22 Mar 2012, 10:43

The strings would just be putting more tension on your neck causing it to bend a little more than the previous strings. I doubt any damage is being done.
A quick tweak of the truss rod should fix the high action, although you will most likely need to re-adjust the bridge a bit too, and you will almost definitely need to adjust the saddles to correct the intonation.

If you do decide to adjust the truss rod, read up on it first. The effect of any truss rod adjustment may not be apparent for some time, so don't go crazy with it. 1/4 to start with, leave it a couple of days and see how that has effected your neck... once you are used to how your neck responds it will be much easier and quicker.

natthu

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **Pepe** » 22 Mar 2012, 11:38

I've gone through this many times with lots of guitars at my work and at home with my Stratocaster and my bass guitar.

Everytime I replace a string set with another one of a different gauge, at least the intonation has to be fine adjusted again. Sometimes even if the string gauge is the same, but the string pack is from a different maker, I have to fiddle around with the bridge saddles.

The neck can bend in each way, depending on what higher or lower string gauge you are using. Don't overdo that thing with the truss rod. I can only recommend turning it in 1/4 or 1/2 turns at a time and let the wood work for an hour or more before you turn it again. (Oh, I just see that natthu has already said quite the same) The effect of tightening the neck truss rod works quicker, than the other way round.

If you have a vibrato system, this may also need adjustments. A floating vibrato system can be a real pain if you use completely different string gauges. Floyd Rose's are the worst!

The D'Addario *Chromes* have a very mellow sound. Maybe you want to try their *Halfround* strings?

Pepe

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **natthu** » 22 Mar 2012, 11:47

> *Pepe wrote:*
> *… Floyd Rose's are the worst!*

Agreed. My first guitar had a crappy Floyd Rose copy. As a beginner I had absolutely no hope of ever getting that stupid thing to work nicely. I almost quit playing guitar because of it.
Fortunately that guitar and its evil bridge are long gone. The only Floyd Rose equipped guitar I have now is a high end Ibanez, which I set up the easy way (I gave it to skugga and he set it up for me)

natthu

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **Pepe** » 22 Mar 2012, 12:11

It's always nice to have a friend who can help!

Some people come in our shop from time to time, asking, if we could tune or adjust their new-bought guitar with a Floyd Rose system. We almost don't ever sell these guitars, so most times we refuse and say, they should have either bought their gear at our place or at least they should have informed themselves better, which guitar to take instead of buying a guitar because of its cool look. We then recommend them to ask the people at the shop where they bought their guitar, instead of bothering us with their mispurchase. Always nice to see those faces, when the people complain that they have to drive 100km or that they have to send the guitar with the post back to the online shop. Whine, whine, whine, sob!

Pepe

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **visserman** » 22 Mar 2012, 13:01

Good question and good response so far!

Funny thing these Flatwounds: use 0.11 set normal strings and compare to a 0.11 set flatwounds and the flatwounds are so MUCH STIFFER. Bending stings with these is a.....ouch.

Their tone may be solid but you trade something back for it.

Should you change your set-up? The answer has been answered before and in short is: Yes.
Will you harm your guitar and neck if you do not do any adjustments. I think it won't be too bad, but as you said before you do not like the feel of how it is now. Well the feel can be the same as it was before once you have it set-up for the flatwounds, and after a while you may like the sound of it as well.

I think flatwounds are mostly used by players who do not do too much stringbending. You also loose some twang as the strings are more beefy.

It makes sense to experiment with string gauges if you have never done this before, as the changes in your tone are huge.
I also do not like the fact, whenver you change your gauge, you will need to readjust your guitar set-up.
I therefore keep using same brand and same gauge and keep the guitar set-up for that particular gauge-set.
I have been using Ernie Ball 0.11's (with a 0.46 and 0.56 for the bottom end) for a long time now. Using those specific gauges in the low end is great for powerchords and any riffs in the low registre, and no, I do not detune to D or anything, just standard, but the sound this gauge gives you is nice and solid, and no problems with bending as well.

I think if you have been using 0.9's and 0.10's you will enjoy the sound of the 0.11's
Why do you want to use Flatwounds??? Any particular reason??

Jazzplayers and their relation to treble: Most Jazzers turn their treble down on their guitars, and the flatwounds have less treble anyway. Anyone does have their own tonal likes and distlikes. I add treble to my sound by boosting treble with my pedals, I know, it is the opposite approach really: Adds a nice, natural distortion on the bridge pick-up, turn away from that pick-up and you are back in the land of clean.

visserman

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **Steam Abacus** » 22 Mar 2012, 13:05

I have a bit of a crusade to try and get every young guitarist I meet to learn the basics of guitar set-up.
Usually, they just want to pay me to do a set up rather than learn anything themselves. But, if you're gigging a lot, things will shift on any guitar over time - the truss rod (neck relief) will need tweaking, bridge saddles move, pickup heights drop, etc. And if you change string gauge (or even brand sometimes) the relief and intonation will need

adjusting. There really is no reason not to learn the basics and keep your instrument playing well (and in tune!).

It's worth getting hold of Dan Erliwine's book 'How to make your guitar play great'. Get a couple of decent screwdrivers and a few allen keys and you're away.

And don't go anywhere near a floyd-rose!

Steam Abacus

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **natthu** » 22 Mar 2012, 14:07

> *visserman wrote:*
> *I think flatwounds are mostly used by players who do not do too much stringbending. You also loose some twang as the strings are more beefy.*

My Thurston Moore JM, although factory strung with rounds, came with a set of flats aswell. I found it was a little too bright for my liking with the rounds (a common observation amongst Jazzmaster players) so I thought I'd give the flats a go. Now I love them and haven't looked back (I'm actually in the process of swapping out the strings on most of my guitars to flats).

I do not do a lot of severe bending (only on the unwound higher strings if at all), so maybe your hypothesis is correct visserman... and yep, you definitely lose twang and gain beefiness with flats, although with a good set of pickups you don't lose clarity like you might expect.

I only ever use flatwounds on my fretless Tele and my fretless bass. Rounds damage the fingerboard more over time than flats... you also get much smoother sliding out of flats, which of course, suits fretless.
I certainly think flatwounds have their place, and it's definitely worth trying out some different string options even if just to rule them out... but ultimately flats aren't for everyone.

natthu

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **visserman** » 23 Mar 2012, 16:51

Natthu great post and good observations!!

Like anything in life, you cannot have it all, whatever you choose you will trade in something.
I have a student who had recently changed his strings to chromes, and I think they are half wound, somewhere in the middle of the round and flatwounds.
I think the gauge he uses is light, but I cannot really bend his stings anymore, and I bend often, and can do it all over the fretboard on any string with the gauge I use (0.11)

I do like that more solid tone, but not being able to bend stings is not great.

Can you not get used to it over time and bend those strings? Maybe, but I think the flatwounds, and halfrounds are used for different reasons and they are not my reasons really.

About fretwear: That is very true: my frets get worn quickly, makes my fingers go dirty, because of the steel scrapping of the strings, again one of those things.
I once noticed how dirty Jeff Beck's fingertips were: Must have been from playing a long time and lots of bending. Again, just one of those little things.

visserman

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **Steam Abacus** » 23 Mar 2012, 19:03

I think Jeff Beck's fingers are probably blackened from working on his hot rod engines

Steam Abacus

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **Franzoni** » 25 Mar 2012, 05:12

> *DasBeef wrote:*
> *EDIT: Just found THESE*

Yeah but the 3rd is still a wound string like on an acoustic....

The wound 3rd in flatwounds will obviously put more tension on the neck...you could try changing it for a unwound .17.....

I was given a set of D'Addarios .11 stainless a while back that i threw onto the Coronado....they seem to like that guitar and hold their tuning pretty well.....

Franzoni

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **Dirk** » 25 Mar 2012, 10:23

I found the bigger the string, the more beefed up the tone is.
So, I use .011-.049 roundwound on the guitar and a big .050-.110 set on the basses.

Dirk

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **DasBeef** » 26 Mar 2012, 02:27

To be honest, I stuck a set of flat wounds on my first guitar and loved them. It made no difference, just felt nice. On the Guild, it has made a difference, and I don't like it. I'm not going to fiddle with the truss rod. I hear Guilds in particular referred to as 'spongy' making me not want to mess about with the truss rod. Before sticking the flatwounds on, it was the best playing guitar I owned. I think the best option will be sticking on normal 10's. I have a set of flatwound 12's I was going to stick on my ES345. I think I shall pass. Might try to acquire some flat wound 10's. Try them. I do like how the strings are harder to bend, and tougher. I enjoy having to play the guitar, but the difference in action is uncomfortable.
Just as a note, I play my acoustic most, and I put 13's on it. I feel it gives me a 'workout' when I play it. Although, I restrung that the same day, and stuck 12's on it for a change. I don't really notice that much difference in playing if I'm honest. The 13's give a 'fatter' tone if I'm honest.....

DasBeef

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **Dirk** » 26 Mar 2012, 15:27

> *DasBeef wrote:*
> *Just as a note, I play my acoustic most*

Says the man with more electrics, amps and pedals than 3 of our other members combined....

Dirk

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **Mully** » 27 Mar 2012, 14:59

I have 09's on all my guitars..... they are simply more comfortable
and I honestly like the sound more..... guess I'm a minority...

have yet to try 08's but I will someday...just for the fun of trying them...but maybe I'll like them

Mully

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **Pepe** » 27 Mar 2012, 17:01

It's .009-.042 for me as well! .008's sound too thin and have a strange feel IMO.
My bass is equipped with .040-.095 strings. I admit I'm a softy!

Pepe

Re: String Gauges and their effect....

by **Dirk** » 27 Mar 2012, 19:17

Some members..... I got bigger strings on my ukelele than that!

Dirk