

# Autoharp Witch



## Buying A Pre-loved Autoharp

There can be a variation in the tone of individual autoharps. Whenever possible play the instrument before buying. Particularly with some older autoharps, you'll want to make certain that it stays in tune. Ideally, you should play it on two different days and for a period of time.

**Don't buy a pre-loved autoharp unless it has been professionally refurbished OR you are up for a bit of tinkering around DIY with your instrument.**

### QUESTIONS TO ASK SELLERS OF PRELOVED AUTOHARPS



1) **Does the instrument have any splits or cracks in the wood, or separation of the joints?** These are not always as obvious as the ones in the photo on left.

2) **Are there signs of dishing or bulging on the top of the autoharp?**

This can be seen by looking across the top from the side to ensure that it doesn't dip towards the sound hole or less commonly bulge upwards? Placing a ruler between the strings with the edge on the body over the sound hole can help to determine if this is a problem. There should be no space under ruler nor should it act like a seesaw on a high point. Problems can arise where the strings anchor on to



instrument and begin to warp and pull on body this can be seen on B model autoharp in photo above right.



3) **Are the tuning pins tight and without rust?** If in poor condition like the ones on the left, it can be difficult to keep the autoharp in tune.

**\*\*\*\*\*IF AN AUTOHARP HAS ANY OF THE ABOVE FLAWS, DON'T BUY\*\*\*\*\***

If an autoharp has problems 1 or 2, it is advised to loosen the strings immediately. 100s of pounds of tension on the strings could cause the autoharp body to

**EXPLODE**

### MORE QUESTIONS TO ASK



- **Do all the chord bars work easily and smoothly?** (NEW covered 21 chord bar set ups with felts and springs left)
- **Are the felts in good condition?** Not worn with deep v shaped string impressions embedded in felt. (NEW felts aprx £1.20 per chord, however replacing them can be time consuming.)
- **Are the strings shiny and without rust?** When were they replaced? (NEW set of strings vary in cost and replacing them can be time consuming.)

## OTHER EXTRAS TO CONSIDER

- Will it come packed in a **Bag or Case**? (These cost aprx £70++ New)
- Is a **tuning wrench** (T-shape or L-shape) included? (can be bought in the UK for around £10+.)



- Does it come with a **separate Digital Tuner**? (These can be purchased aprx £10) Built in Tuners like the one on the left are NOT the most accurate.
- Does the Autoharp have **strap buttons**? Recommended if you play the autoharp on your chest. (Adding strap buttons £10+ )

- Does the instrument have a **built in pick-up**? Do you need one? (Adding a NEW built in one may cost £150+) Obviously pick-ups help amplify your autoharp; however it is also handy to plug a digital tuner in when trying to tune up in a noisy situation.
- Does the instrument have **fine tuners**? Do you want them? They can speed up tuning and make it a simpler affair for tweaking strings. Oscar Schmidt fine tuners like the ones in photo on right are NOT recommended. Other styles fitted on more expensive handcrafted Luthier autoharps are a lovely extra (aprx £220+)



## THE LURE OF ONLINE PLATFORMS

It's clear from eBay, Facebook Market Place, Gumtree and more platform listings that many vendors do not have a clue about the instruments they are selling, and may not be able to identify problems with the autoharp on offer. On the other hand, some vendors can be knowledgeable and are able to include detailed information and numerous photos to reassure potential buyers that the instrument is good. Possibilities are out there, but it's definitely **Buyer Beware!** **Ask questions and get photos photos.** If you decide to purchase a pre-loved autoharp online, it's a case of **trusting the vendor and hoping it is packed and transported securely.** For more information read **How to Package An Autoharp.pdf** available on the Autoharp Witch Website

## IMPORTING AN AUTOHARP

- Not recommend for a first autoharp. It is not necessarily as cheap and easy as it may appear. Your purchase will attract handling charges, shipping charges, Import Duty and VAT, all of which can add significantly to the original price. Visit [HMRC Tax information](#)
- Vendors may not be prepared to ship to the UK – check before bidding or buying.
- Do they have experience shipping autoharps? You want them to be VERY careful about how they pack the autoharp.

If you require further assistance or would like to purchase items please contact [joolz@autoharpwitch.com](mailto:joolz@autoharpwitch.com)