



## Product of the Year

# Key Leaves: Simple, Brilliant, Effective

BY PAUL HAAR

I live in Nebraska and where there is much to be said about living in the heartland, one thing is certain: we have serious humidity. Our humidity kept my favorite uncle from attending our wedding (hurt his knees too much. I've become an expert on home dehumidifiers and I have lived with the special hell that is inflicted upon Midwestern saxophonists for far too long to remember. I have tried everything to stop sticky keys, from goops, potions and powders to dusts, papers and pads. One repairman even suggested I try a 2000 grit wet/dry automotive polishing sandpaper. Really, where am I going to find that stuff?

So, my legendary skepticism was on high alert when I came upon the Key Leaves® booth at the recent NASA conference. Created by saxophonist Rulon Brown, Key Leaves products are designed to eliminate sticky sax pads by leaving keys open to dry. Rulon is a Seattle-based saxophonist and entrepreneur who touts that using Key Leaves® will result in 98% fewer stuck keys. He is a charismatic fellow who is supremely confident in his products. He was kind enough to send me a set of Key Leaves® sax key props and Key Leaves Vent Vine™ (with Vent Cap™) to see if we could finally tackle and defeat the vaunted Midwest humidity.

I tested both products during the thick of the Nebraska heat and humidity, and my impressions are quite emphatic.





So, the big question is: Are Key Leaves® really necessary? Well, that has been a source of much debate in many a saxophone chat room. Die-hard players are fervent in their claims that products like these (as well as swabs) are for “sissies.” Well, I am a “data guy” who likes to have proof, and proof I got. Key Leaves® products were put to a disgusting year-long test and the results are pretty eye-opening ([KeyLeaves.com/Proof](http://KeyLeaves.com/Proof)).

Beyond the convincing evidence that cleaning your instrument is important, it is also practical. A typical overhaul and re-pad costs well over \$1,000. A small investment (\$24.99 MSRP for Key Leaves sax key props, \$49.99 for Vent Vines with a cap or \$69.99 for the premium kit containing both) is not only going to prolong the longevity of your pads, it's going to lower the repair costs associated with moisture issues. If the cost of the Key Leaves products are still too much for you, then I am certain you can't afford that latte from the local coffee shop every week...right?

I found Key Leaves® products easy to use, although the Vent Vine can be somewhat of a frustration to us aging players with dexterity issues. But it is nothing that can't be overcome with a good pair of reading glasses. Both are well made, using quality materials and are produced right here in the good-ole US of A.

Like so many great products, the Key Leaves® made me ask, “Why hasn't someone come up with this before?” They are simple, well designed and so easy to use. With so many products falling victim to fads and trends, Key Leaves® products are practical, effective and useful. In my opinion, you don't have much to lose, except sticky keys and costly repairs.

This is the absolute silliest product that I've ever seen... that I can't live without. It fully delivers as advertised and is so simple and effective that I have yet to experience sticky keys since using them.

Key Leaves® sax key props are graduated, half-moon wedges that hold open the low Eb and low C# keys. On most saxophones, venting the low C# key will also open the G# key, allowing air to circulate through the instrument. The props are made from a flexible silicone that is washable and durable. It is solid enough to hold the key open but not so rigid that one can risk bending the key. They come with a flexible silicone strap that can be adjusted for bari saxes and older saxophones that have larger gaps between key fittings. Key Leaves sax key props fit all alto, tenor, bari, bass and C-melody saxophones and dozens of how-to-videos are available at [www.KeyLeaves.com/Instructions](http://www.KeyLeaves.com/Instructions) to demonstrate their use with vintage or modern saxes.

The Key Leaves VentVine™ is a string of rigid nylon leaves that prop open all the pads above the left-hand, (high D up to high F#) to allow air flow and stop not only sticky keys, but also the common metal corrosion found on palm-key tone holes and resonators. The unique design never touches the pad leather, instead locking into the tone hole and balancing against the center of the resonator. The Vent Vine™ is custom fit based upon the sax model, key height and type of resonator you use. My Vent Vine™ came with a Vent Cap™, a perforated end cap to allow for greater air flow through the top and sides. If you are partial to your vintage or custom end cap, Vent Vine™ can be customized with a finger tab option for use with any end plug you wish.