

Shavano Music Online Making Cabinet Covers; Part 1

4/99 - Jens Moller - http://www.colomar.com/Shavano/make_covers1.html

Once you buy or make expensive gear, you really want to protect it as its being moved around. Many times, you can buy travel covers when you buy gear new, however, many people often skip the expense because they would rather spend more on things that make sounds. If you buy gear used, odds are good that protective covers are no longer available, hard to come by or very costly. If you built the cabinets yourself, you probably have no choice but to make your own covers.

If you can locate a Sewing machine that works, you can make your own covers, or find someone that can make them for you (or teach you how to sew and help you make the covers). I prefer to make my own. Over the years, many people were surprised to find out that I can sew (My mother taught me when I was very young - its been a valuable skill that I have used over the years to fix things as well as make many items that I couldn't buy otherwise.) Being that I have thousands of dollars worth of musical gear, and it had to travel, I thought the gear should always look its best.

Materials

Most professionally made covers simply slide over the top of your gear. Often there are cutouts for and handles or straps. Professional covers are usually made out of vinyl (plastic) with a fabric backing. These are water-proof to a point, and often look quite nice. They will get beat up and protect the gears corners and edges, as well as keeping liquids off of things. This vinyl is usually sold in fabric stores by the Yard (or Meter).

Personally, I don't care that much for Vinyl covers, mostly because they tend to be damaged fairly easily (Vinyl tears when the thin fabric backing is pulled too hard, its especially susceptible when its cold out, or the covers are many years old). I prefer to make my covers out out Denim (the same stuff that Blue Jeans are made of). I find that its tougher, but not as water resistant. Its also easier to sew when fabric is 6 layers thick in places. You need a reasonably strong sewing machine to handle either type of material. You can waterproof Denim with spray on products, such as 'Scotch-Gard' (Trademarked product made by 3M). This will allow it work as well as most vinyl covers. The other thing that is handy with Denim covers is that you can toss them in the washing machine to clean them.

If you use a heavy fabric to make your covers with, pre-wash the bundles of material and run them through a clothes dryer before you cut any material. Fabrics, such as Denim, are usually cotton based products and will shrink the first time they get wet and are dried. The last thing you want to do is make covers that fit perfectly until after he first time you wash them.

I also like to use a high quality thread that is not cotton based. I buy spools of thread that are used to do upholstery - this is normally Nylon, Rayon or Polyester based - 10 to 20 times stronger than cotton thread, and only a little thicker. Its available in many colors at most Sewing/Fabric stores. You can use cotten thread provided that its fairly strong.

A good yard (or meter long) stick will help you draw accurate lines before you cut any fabric. I use a chalk pencil on the fabric to mark measurements. The Chalk comes off quite easily on its own, leaving no marks on the fabric itself. These pencils are available in many colors at Sewing/Fabric Supply stores. You can also use an ink pen - I would avoid permanent ink markers,

There are many types of sewing machine needles - most sewing machines use a general purpose needle that may or may not work with the heavier thread I reccomend. You may want to buy a few that can handle heavier/thicker material and heavy thread. These are available at Sewing/Fabric Supply stores. If you are unsure which ones to use, make a note of the brand of Sewing Machine you are using, and ask one of the people working at the shop to help you - explain what you are making and ask for recommendations. They might try to sell you a Sewing Machine that is heavy duty - Unless you plan to go into business making custom covers, a general purpose sewing machine should work just fine for the few covers you will put together. If you plan to do this frequently, you might want to invest in a heavy duty production quality sewing machine.

You will need at least 100 pins to hold the fabric together while you sew things. These will have a large (1/8 inch - 3mm - or larger) plastic head on it. These should be brightly colored to simplify finding them while sewing or incise you drop some on the floor.

Measurements

Before you buy material, you will need to know how much to get. I often buy end bolts (these are the last few yards on a roll - The roll is called a **bolt**) at Fabric Stores, usually because they are cheaper. If you can find a place that sells close-outs or over-runs, you will get the best price per square yard (or square meter).

The covers need to slide on and off with little effort. This means that you need a cover that is larger than the item you are

covering. You also have to take into account the sewn edges. The bottom of the cover needs to be folded over 2 times then sewn to avoid frayed edges - the technique will be much like that used at the bottom pant leg of your Blue Jeans. I always add 1/2 inch (13mm) for every edge that I will sew to another edge, and add an additional 1 inch (25mm) of fabric for each edge. The bottom edge (which is folded over) needs an extra 2 inches (50mm) to allow it to hang down beyond the item being covered (to protect the bottom edges), and allow it to be folded over 2 times and sewn.

Most fabric in the United States comes in 45 inch (112cm) or 60 inch (150cm) widths. This is consistent with either vinyl or heavy fabric materials. Once a cotton based is washed and dried, it may shrink as much as 2 inches (50mm) in width. Fabric backed vinyl doesn't shrink when washed (in fact you shouldn't wash it at all - never put it in a clothes dryer!!). Any plans you create should include both of these sizes so that you can buy the most cost effective material that you find. Unlike clothing where the grain of the fabric needs to run the same general direction, covers can be made of cut rectangles laid out pretty much anyway that uses the fabric more effectively.

If you want to make patterns, there are 2 approaches.

- For a single cabinet, or maybe 2 cabinets, use newspaper that is cut to size and shape (including additional widths and lengths as discussed above).
- If you are going to make a number of identical covers, use poster-board (lightweight cardboard). It holds up better, and you can file it away for future use if you plan to make more of a given design later.

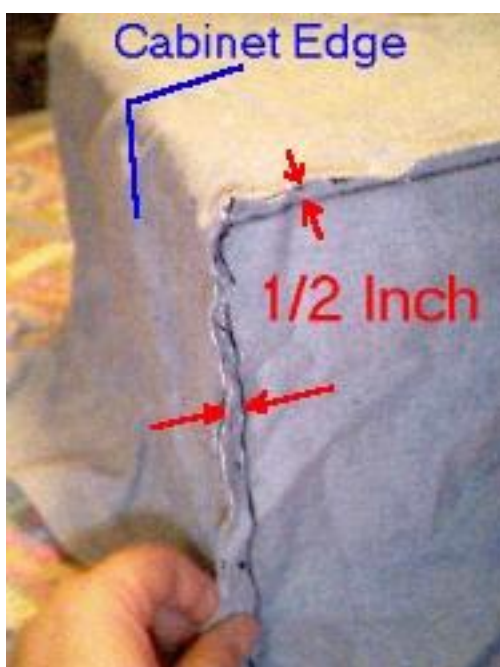
Patterns allow you to quickly produce covers if you are making them for a number of identical cabinets.

If you get pieces that are long enough to cover the front, top and back of a cabinet all as one single piece, this will save you time since you avoid sewing 2 edges. This means you will only need to cut the material for 2 sides and sew them on. In cases like this, I prefer to lay the long piece draped over the cabinet after it has been cut width and length. This will allow me to pin the side fabric exactly where it is supposed to go. It also forces the top of the cabinet edges to line up correctly. It's also better to do when you have a partial sloped front cabinet such as those used by Marshall.

There usually is a definite front surface and back surface to the fabric. When you are pinning the fabric, the front (good) side faces inward (away from you) and the backside faces outward (towards you). The sewn seams will eventually be on the inside, but while you are working on getting the edges and fabric pieces aligned, you will be working on the backside of the material. In the case of vinyl fabric - the vinyl surface will face the cabinet, and the fabric portion will be facing you.

At this point in time, you do not want to pin up the bottom edges of the cover - these will be done once you are finished with the rest of the cover.

Sewing the edges



You will be doing mostly straight stitching (any home sewing machine can do this). Once pinned, bring the fabric over to the sewing machine and start sewing. Sew all around a full side (if possible to do in one pass) leaving 1/2 inch (13mm) of fabric on the edge. Pull the pins out as you come to them, and hold the fabric in its desired location. Once you have finished a single pass, you will want to go over the same seam another time. Double sew each edge.

The picture shows 2 pieces of cloth - being pinned together. We have positioned the 2 pieces over top and side of the cabinet and are pinning the fabric together to accurately fit the form and shape. Doing this greatly reduces sewing errors and speeds construction time

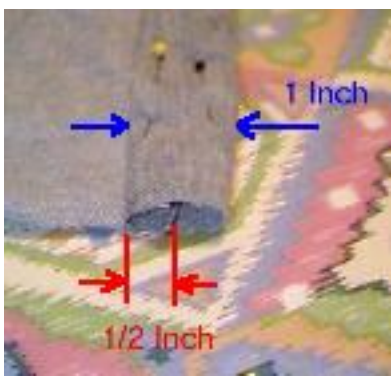
If possible, pre-assemble the entire cover in this manner. If there are any problems, now is the time to find them and fix them.

Repeat this process for each individual piece of fabric that needs to be sewn. If need be, take the cover over to the cabinet and test fit it again to make sure it still slides on and off easily (it will be inside out at this stage of the sewing process). If not, re-adjust the pins or, if need be, rip out any seams that are not done correctly and do it over again.

The picture shows 2 pieces of cloth - pinned together - being sewn with a straight stitch. Set to the longest stitch size on the machine.



Doing the Bottom Edge

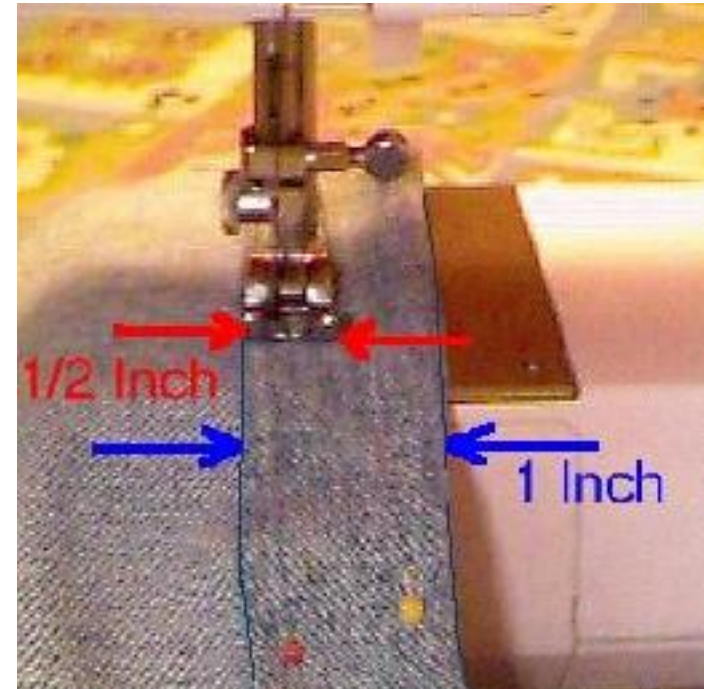


At this time, the cover you have made should be done everywhere, except the bottom edge. You want to put the cover (still inside out) on the cabinet and pin the bottom edge so that there is a 1 inch (25mm) overhang after the fabric has been folded. Pin this location all around the bottom of the cover. The cover should still slide on and off with very little effort. Remove the cover from the cabinet.

The picture shows a double fold - pinned together. You will be sewing over top of the second fold (shown here in red).

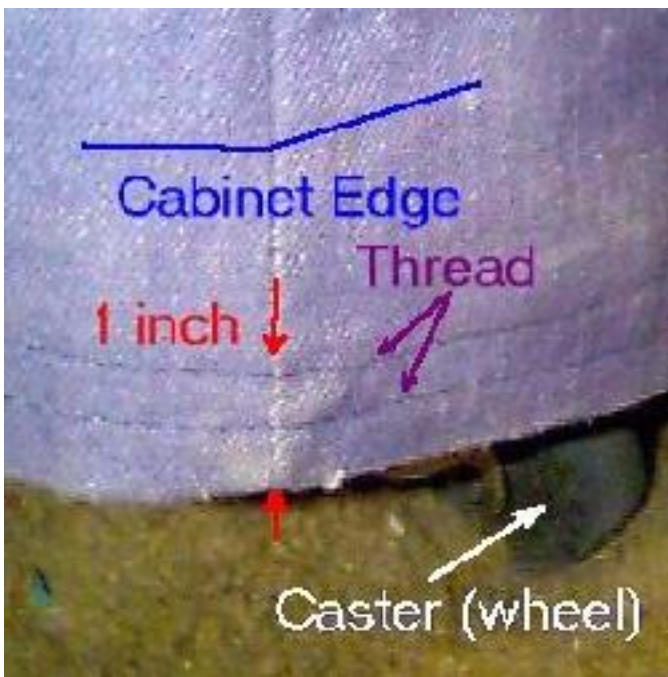
At this point, you need to remove any excess fabric and return to the sewing machine. Measure 1 1/2 inches (38mm) from the fold and cut off any left over fabric, leaving the pins in place. Once done, measure 1/2 inch from the cut edge and fold it under. Pin this all the way around. You will be sewing on the folded under edge. Folding it under in this way keeps it from unraveling as the cover is used.

Starting at one of the side seams, start sewing 1/4 of an inch (7mm) from the folded under edge. Go all the way around the bottom edge, pulling out pins as you come to them. Stitching will be more difficult at the points where a lot of layers of fabric bunch up. Try to make this area have as few layers as possible to sew thru. Take your time - you'll get thru these places. As you did on the edges, go around this edge 2 times plus a few inches.



Trim the thread. If you have it available, there is a product called 'Fray-Check' that you can put on the areas where you started and stopped sewing to prevent the thread from loosening up - apply a few dabs of this liquid there.

Finishing up



The picture shows the finished double fold - double stitched. This is on my Twin Reverb - you can see one of the casters (wheels). Note that the cover does not drag on the ground.

At this point, you can turn the cover right-side out and try it out on your cabinet. It should fit nicely, and still be easy to put on and take off. It actually should fill up with air and slow down as you pull in over the cabinet.

At this point, we have not covered how to make openings for handles and straps. Some cabinets do need to have additional openings, others do. Part 2 will cover how to do this.

Photos taken with a Kodak DC25 Digital camera and Tiffen Close-up lens.

Related Fabric Reference Hot Links

- o [Sewing Reference Manual](#). Aimed at the beginner - [Textiles & Sewing information](#). Focused towards making clothing, but, still has lots of explanations and diagrams.

Questions? Comments? [Contact Us](#).



[Return to Shavano Music Online Home page](#)