



**4285 Bluegrass Special Budget priced banjo.** Mahogany neck with diamond snowflake inlaid fingerboard. Flat head tone ring, tube, flange and hoop are made from special resophonic alloy. Mahogany resonator with inlaid ring. Geared offset pegs.

**4289 Minstrel Five Star** The first Alvarez banjo. Five-piece hard rock maple neck with rosewood center strip. Wreath design inlay on rosewood fingerboard. Offset geared machine heads. Maple resonator with fleur-de-lis shell inlay.

**4293 Silver Belle** Bell brass flat head tone ring, and hoop. Maple neck with mother-of-pearl inlaid fingerboard. Mahogany resonator with inlaid concentric rings. Laminated 3/4" three-ply maple shell. Planetary pegs.

**4300 Denver Belle** Vintage design. Three piece mahogany neck with ebony inlay. Bell brass flat head tone ring and hoop. Maple checkerboard inlay on side of fingerboard and on jacaranda resonator. Ornate mother-of-pearl fingerboard inlay. Planetary pegs. Hand carved heel with floral design.

## Banjos

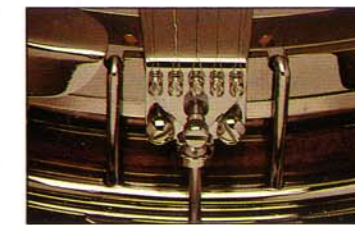
**W**HILE I AM LOOKING AT THE NECK, I CHECK FOR A SILKY FINISH WHICH ALLOWS A SMOOTH SLIDING FINGER ACTION. I ALSO CHECK THAT THE FRETS ARE smooth and round. Rough frets are hard on both strings and fingers, and a fret of the wrong height can cause a wrong note even when you play the right one. I file and shape the frets until they're perfect.

I make sure that the pegs turn smoothly and that there is no slippage. Alvarez banjos use either sturdy geared-offset pegs, or, for extremely high accuracy, planetary pegs with a four-to-one gear ratio.

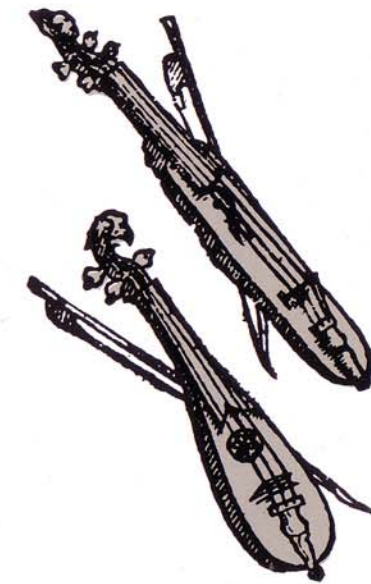
I check that the brackets work smoothly, so that I can quickly and easily adjust the tightness of the head. Alvarez banjos have 24 heavy-duty chrome plated brackets. I also check the tailpiece. I prefer a Kirschner-style tailpiece because it doesn't have a tendency to rattle the way a clamshell tailpiece does. The 4289, 4293, 4300 and 4310 have adjustable chrome plated Kirschner-style tailpieces.

The most important part of any banjo is the sound-amplifying tone ring and flange assembly. Ordinary iron simply doesn't provide enough ring or volume, so Alvarez tone rings, flanges and tubes are made of either solid bell brass or resophonic alloy.

Alvarez laminated shells are machined to fit precisely to the tone ring.



Kirschner-style tailpiece.



The ancient ancestor of the banjo was the Rebec: a skin head stretched over a gourd or hollow body with a neck holding three gut strings. It originated in Arabia a thousand years ago and was carried east and west with the spread of Islam.

The true American banjo wasn't invented until 1831, when Joel Sweeney added a fifth string, higher in pitch than any of the others, right next to the lowest pitched string, and secured by a peg halfway up the neck. The fifth string is then blended into the sound of the banjo and creates the familiar ring.

This odd instrument, with four pegs at the top of the neck and one peg sticking out on the side, captured the heart of America and is known as America's most original and distinctive musical invention.