

Tune Up

by Nodar Rode

I equate drums to cars. Why? Because just like a car, problems with drums start to arise soon after they're purchased, even when they're top of the line. You might find that hard to believe, but you don't see or notice what I do.



Nodar Rode has been making, fixing and designing drums since 1985. Some view Nodar's Shop as a museum, but really it's a store and workshop in one. Customers include everyone from pros to beginners, all getting equal time and attention. Services include: Nestable drums, vintage drum restoration, custom edges and snare beds, drum finishes, cymbal repair, drum repair/alteration and more.

With drums, the main problem to be aware of is sound. Understanding sound is based on the level of the musician and his or her ability to hear the difference between good and bad sound. Being able to hear that difference helps in determining the origin of the problem. Though the learning process might be long, I find that most dedicated drummers are willing to take the time to gain that knowledge.

Before you can recognize good or bad sound, it is absolutely imperative to first learn how to tune a drum. It may not be as easy as you think. The average snare drum has twenty tuning rods. Imagine a guitar with twenty strings instead of six. Add in a tom or two, along with a bass drum, and you've got yourself a headache! Some drummers don't even know where to start.

To begin with, tuning drums is a serious art form; without this knowledge a drummer cannot understand how to judge the sound of a drum. You can achieve this in the following ways.

First: Get help! Find somebody who can tune drums well. Someone who can get the best possible sound out of any brand or quality of drum.

Second: Learn the art of drum tuning. Take tuning lessons.

Just for the record: Most drummers have difficulties tuning a drum, but don't want to admit it. Only very few are honest about it, including many top players. Believe it or not, there are some drum technicians out there that make more money on a recording session tuning the kit, than the drummer who is playing it!

Let's assume that we all think we know how to tune drums, that we've already tried all the tuning tricks, and



still cannot get proper results. What are we going to do? Use the same principle you use when you have a serious car problem - go to a mechanic. The only difference is, with the drum sound dilemma, you have to go to a "drum craftsman," not a "drum mechanic." Hopefully, there is somebody close by that can help. If not, go the extra mile and find someone who is good at this craft, even if it requires a bit of travel.

As a "drum mechanic," you might be able

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to fix the strainer, butt plate or lug casing, replace a tension rod or lock washers, etc., but remember, they do not qualify you as drum craftsman.

Bear with me for a moment before you disagree.

Almost anyone can be a drum mechanic, but only a handful people know what to do with a drum shell in order to get a sophisticated sound out of it. Mechanical drum parts have very little to do with sound. For instance, you can replace a \$20.00 strainer with a \$100.00 one. The new strainer could be stronger, more comfortable, or just a better looking part. Yes, you will enjoy the action of an expensive strainer, but trust me, the





sound of your snare drum will be the same. It's the same concept for many of the other parts on your drum. The main sources of sound come from the drum shell, drum head, hoops and snare wires. You don't need much help with drum heads, hoops and snare wires, you can handle that. But when you have to alter, modify, customize or redesign the drum, for sound purposes - please turn to someone who is more qualified to make the proper changes. This is the time to find a drum craftsman. Someone who knows how to reshape and modify the shell, to get a new and better sound out of your current drum.

Possible Modifications

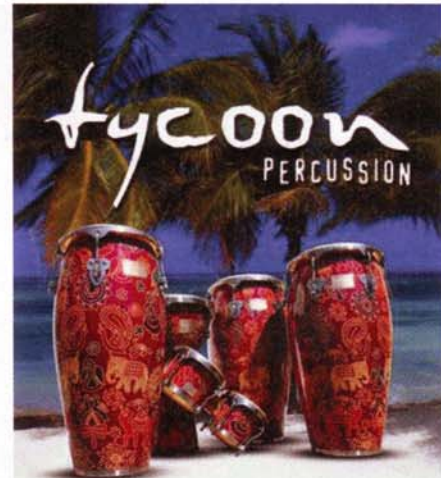
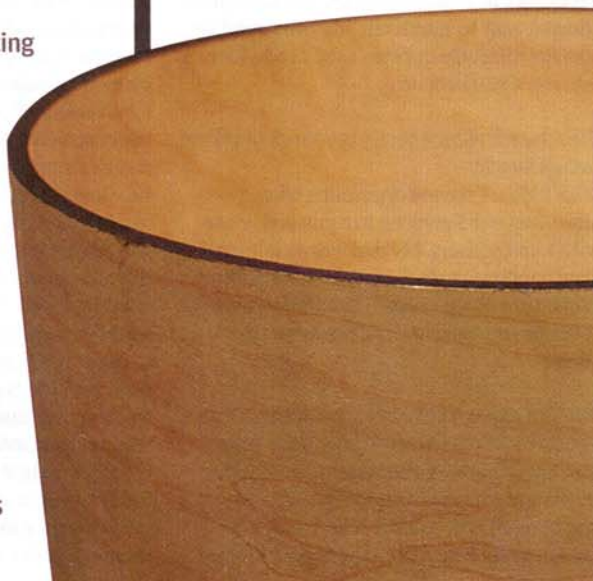
- New top edge
- New bottom edge
- New snare bed on the strainer side
- New snare bed on the butt plate side
- Proportionally reducing the thickness of the shell from outside
- Evenly increasing the thickness of the shell from inside
- Installing new reinforcement rings (glue rings)
- Removing old reinforcement rings
- Gradually trimming down existing reinforcement hoops

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The work of a drum craftsman requires knowledge, solid skills and experience. In addition, this person has to understand the risks involved. You can easily destroy the drum and more importantly, you can hurt yourself when operating power and non-power tools.

As a drummer, you know perfectly well how difficult it is to become a professional player. It takes many years of practice, dedication and experience. Well, the same goes for a “drum craftsman.” As with any craft, it takes a long time to learn and a life time to master.

As a drummer, it's good to be a drum mechanic. However, when it comes to the serious stuff, please protect yourself and your drums and let the professionals do the job. *



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