

BEGINNERS' GUIDE TO DRUMS

PART 2: BUYING YOUR FIRST DRUM KIT



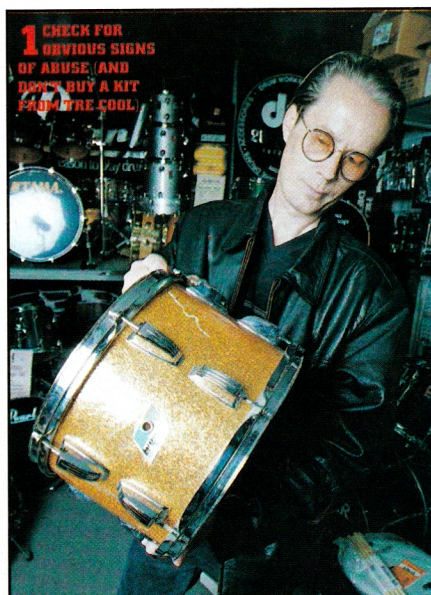
Words: Toni Cannelli Photography: Richard Ecclestone

Welcome to the second part of *The Beginners' Guide To Drums*. This month we shall be looking at the tricky task of choosing and

buying your first drum kit. What makes up a drum set? These days the basic drum set consists of a bass drum, snare drum, two mounted tom toms and a floor tom-tom (on legs). The hardware with the kit will consist of a bass drum pedal, and snare drum stand, a hi-hat stand, a cymbal stand and a stool. Cymbals for the drum kit are not always included, but basically you will need a set of hi-hat cymbals, a ride cymbal and a crash cymbal (see picture).

SECOND-HAND KITS

You can pick up a second-hand kit via the local paper or from your local music shop. When viewing a kit you should look for tell-tale signs of abuse – whether the drums are scratched, dented, rusty or generally uncared for. Also, check if there are any bubbles on a stick-on finish, as



1 CHECK FOR OBVIOUS SIGNS OF ABUSE (AND DON'T BUY A KIT THAT'S TOO COOL)

Last month we got to grips with sticks; this time, our essential guide for drumming newcomers takes us shopping for a whole kit.

very carefully, as any faults in them will give you serious problems later. Hold them up to the light and look for any hairline cracks, normally seen on the edge of the cymbal or on the bell of the cymbal. Remember, a cracked cymbal will only get worse and should be avoided. Don't buy it!

NEW KITS

There are a lot of cheap starter kits on the market. Most of these have okay hardware, and the drums are generally fairly well made. Some kits even come with a starter pack of cymbals, but otherwise starter packs such as the Sabian B8 or Pro or Zildjian ZBT are good options. My advice is to buy a kit made by a more well-known manufacturer like Yamaha, Premier, Pearl or Mapex, otherwise it might be hard to sell the kit as a complete set in the future when you do decide to upgrade.

DRUM HEADS

If you have bought a second-hand kit, the chances are that the drum heads are worn and have lost their elasticity. On the other hand, if you bought a new kit they might have really inferior drums heads (to keep the price down) and the drums may sound like biscuit tins. To make your kit sound a hundred times better, it's a good idea to invest in some top-of-the-range drum heads. For the snare drum I recommend a Remo

Ambassador or an Evans Genera; for tom-toms, Remo Pinstripes or Evans G2s and for the bass drum, a Remo Powerstroke 3 or an Evans EQ3. The drum heads make a huge difference to a kit, so it's worth the investment.

NEW CYMBALS

You can buy cymbals in box sets, where the cymbals have been matched. But if you want to pick and mix your cymbals, ask the shop assistant to put them on stands and tap each one in turn. Listen for a note from each cymbal that works well with the others, like a note in a musical scale. Remember that a drum kit played well is a musical instrument, not just something you hit (despite what guitarists might think!). My advice on cymbals is to go for quality rather than quantity. It's better to have a couple of great sounding cymbals than ten that sound like dustbin lids. Again, a good choice would be Sabian Pro or Zildjian ZBT.

DRUM CASES

It's a good idea to think about a set of cases for your new kit, so that when you are moving them around in the car or van, they won't become scratched. A second-hand set of cases is perfectly okay. Remember that some day you may want to sell this kit for a better one, so keep it in good condition. ▶



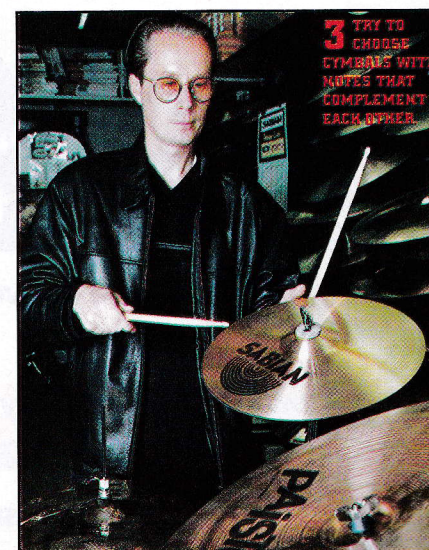
2 HAIRLINE CRACKS WILL ONLY GET WORSE, SO LOOK OUT FOR THEM

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▶ PREPARING YOUR ROOM

Now you have bought your kit, it's a good idea to speak to your neighbours and discuss the best times of day for you to practise. Many neighbours will have young children, might work nights, or go to bed early, but if all parties know when the drumming will start and stop, it will save a lot of friction all round. If you neglect this simple courtesy, you may find that they will retaliate by turning up the television full blast, or taking up violin. You have been warned.

If you have a basement, this would be the best place for your drums as a lot of the sound will be absorbed into the ground. If you can put your drums on a carpet, or hang old curtains in the room, then that's even better.



3 TRY TO CHOOSE CYMBALS WITH NOTES THAT COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER

SETTING UP YOUR KIT

It's incredible to think that something as simple as a toaster comes with an instruction manual, but something as complex as a drum kit does not come with any instructions. If you have a friend with a kit, you could give them a call, or try fumbling along using a picture of



4 A TYPICAL KIT SET-UP. EXPERIMENT TO FIND THE CONFIGURATION THAT BEST SUITS YOU

a drum kit from a copy of *Rhythm* or a drum brochure. I have found two videos on the subject which are very useful: *Solving The Mystery Of Setting Up Drums* by Craig Ellis or *The Pearl Instruction Video* by Eric Singer. Either of these videos ought to be available at any good local music store.

Now you have bought your kit, the

next step will be tuning and getting yourself comfortable behind it. This will be the topic for next month. Until then, keep practising! ♦

For more details about Toni Cannelli and The Drummers Alliance visit the website: www.tonicannelli.com