



What Became Of Leedy?

Q I've recently rekindled my interest in drumming after almost fifty years away from it. A lot has changed, but I'm looking forward to this being a productive hobby now that I'm retired. After reading your past two issues, I can see that I have a lot of catching up to do. I can't believe the number of manufacturers advertising in your magazine! From my days as a drummer I can remember the Ludwig, Leedy, Slingerland, and Gretsch brands. I don't see anything about Leedy these days. Did they fold up, get bought out, or move to another country? It seems to me they had a pretty good slice of the market back then, and were good-looking drums, to boot. Can you provide any information on their fate?

Lorne Glassford
Prince George, BC, Canada

A At one time Leedy was one of the leading manufacturers of drums in the world. The company was founded by U.G. Leedy in 1895 and was originally located in Indianapolis, Indiana. By 1919 Leedy had sixty employees and was a brand noted for quality workmanship and innovative design in drums. By 1923 the company was important enough to publish its own drumming magazine, *Leedy Drum Topics*. The magazine offered information on products and endorsers, along with playing tips and humorous anecdotes. U.G. Leedy sold his company to C.G. Conn (a huge band-instrument manufacturer) in 1929. Conn moved the factory to Elkhart, Indiana in 1930. For the next two decades, Leedy drums "represented American craftsmanship at its best," according to drum historian Harry Cangany.

Conn had also purchased the Ludwig & Ludwig company in 1930, and actually operated the two drum brands side-by-side—yet independent from each other—for almost twenty years. But by 1950 it seemed more logical—and economical—to merge the two lines and operate only one drum brand. Thus Leedy & Ludwig was born, and drums were produced until 1954. The idea was not a success, however, and

in 1954 Conn sold the Leedy division to H.H. "Bud" Slingerland, Jr., and the Ludwig & Ludwig division to William F. Ludwig, Jr.

Bud Slingerland established the Leedy division of his company as a secondary line, hoping to lure dealers away from rival William F. Ludwig's upstart WFL brand. The problem was that his "Leedy" drums were, again according to Harry Cangany, "clearly Slingerland mahogany shells with a mix of Slingerland and Leedy hardware." Put succinctly, the Slingerland-owned Leedy effort was a flop, and manufacturing was shut down in the late 1950s.

Drum Re-Finishing

Q I've recently purchased a set of Gretsch drums in need of some cosmetic help, and if I'm successful I'd like to remove the glued-on finishes from a few other drums. In which *MD* issues was the re-finishing of drums documented, and how can I go about getting copies?

David Troen-Krasnow
Needham, MA

A The most comprehensive articles we've run on the subject of re-covering and refinishing were all presented in the *Shop Talk* department a few years ago. They are: "Removing Plastic Coverings" (Douglas Smith, June 1982), "Re-Covering Your Drums" (Pat Foley, May 1984), and "Refinishing Your Drums" (David Creamer, December 1984). You can contact our back-issue department at (201) 239-4140 to inquire if copies of those issues are available. If copies are not available, you can order photocopies of the articles themselves.

Percussion Notation

Q I'm looking for a standard notation that will allow me to write down conga and World Beat-type rhythms. Up to now I've been using my own variation of the box-type notation style. In the January '95 *MD*, an article titled "The Soca" by Rich Rychel contains brake drum, cowbell, and conga parts that appear to be in a stan-

dard tablature. But the music key at the top of the article seems to relate to the drumset and not the percussion.

Apart from the article, how do we differentiate open tones, slaps, muffled tones, and bass tones? How do we differentiate the different drums in a set of congas? How do we note their tuning? How do we notate other percussion instruments, such as bells, shakers, blocks, guiros, talking drums, etc.?

Bob Bourbonnais
Felton, CA

A We referred this question to Norm Weinberg, who recently completed a massive work on the subject of standardized drumset notation. Norm replied, "The problems of percussion notation have been a much-discussed topic for many years. During the past fifty years, many 'ethnic' percussion instruments have found their way into the standard percussion literature. Most of these instruments have a strong tradition of oral teaching and improvisation, rather than written methods and notated parts. At this point in time, I am not aware of any 'standard' notation for congas, talking drums, tabla, etc. If you need a notational system for your own use, just about anything that makes sense to you will work fine. If you plan to write patterns and rhythms for others you'll need to create a system that is logical and easy to read and write.

"When I devised the *Guidelines For Drumset Notation*, I first made an exhaustive study of the written information and the music literature already available. That study gave me a better sense of what needed to be written down and how to write it. I suggest that you begin on a similar path—gathering all the notational information you can find concerning conga materials already on the market. Rather than creating an entirely new notation system from scratch, it might be more logical to build upon the ideas of other composers, performers, and authors.

"Questions concerning the notation of more common (and a few not-so-common) percussion instruments can be answered by reading one of the standard texts on musi-

cal notation. Below are just a few suggestions to get you started. These books and articles will provide you with a great deal of information on traditional percussion

notation and will serve as a basis for any notation explorations you take. As you check them out, read their bibliographies to learn of other important sources. One last

suggestion: Someone is going to devise a standard notation for conga and other exotic percussion instruments. Why shouldn't it be *you*? Go for it!"

Selected Percussion Notation Bibliography

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