

The Custom Drum Shop

About 4 years ago, I was in Gainesville, Ga. , searching drum shops and music stores for vintage drums . As I walked by the storefront of Pro Music, I was attracted to a beautiful Red Sparkle set in the window. It was a 20",12", 14", set with a matching snare. Beautiful kit. The badge was round and had *AHA* written across it. I was not familiar with this drum company, but they sure were nice looking drums. The store owner said AHA Drums was a small custom drum company that worked in a certain section of the store. When I left the music store I took a business card. And that was that.

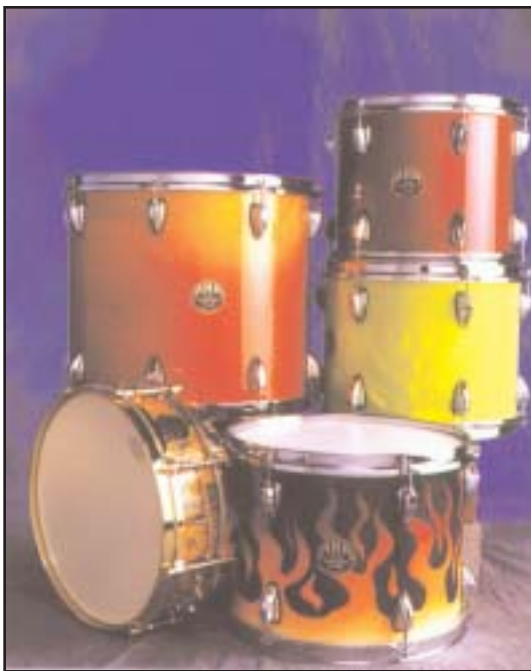


by Billy Jeansonne

drumkits available anywhere. They will custom build and finish just about any configuration drumset or snare drum you want, wrap finish or lacquered finish. But they do lean more toward lacquered finishes, dyed to any color or combination of colors you want. Sparkle finishes are available in addition to oyster and pearl coverings.

Jess does most of the dying of the all maple Keller shells. An alcohol base dye is used instead of a stain because of the superior finish it helps create. Different color dyes can be mixed to create just about any color or shade you desire. They can even create combined colors and shades on the same drum. A superior quality finish is achieved because after the drum is dyed to the desired color, several coats of urethane are applied to the shell with fine sanding and buffing between each coat until a mirrored finish is achieved.

Aaron focuses more on what makes each drum sound the way it does. He cuts the 45 degree bearing edges along with a half round counter cut which allows the drumhead to float and resonate freely for a very open sound. Close attention to accuracy of the bearing edges is a main concern as



F a s t forward to the the 1st Annual Atlanta Vintage & Custom D r u m show. I w e n t through my busi- n e s s c a r d s a n d name list that I h a d c o m -

piled for contacts. AHA Custom Handcrafted Drums. I'll give them a call to see if they would be interested in an exhibitor booth at the drum show. They enthusiastically accepted. They had one of the most attractive displays at the show. I finally got to meet the team of Aaron & Jess Hughes which make up AHA Drums. Two of the nicest guys you will ever meet.

That was September 18,1999. Well today, about 2 years later, I finally walked into DRUMS 101. The Hughes brothers have opened their own store / drumshop in Gainesville, Ga. after actually starting the company back in November of 1997. And what a setup they have! These guys make some of the best looking and sounding custom



Aaron Hughes cutting the bearing edges

Aaron told me, that in his opinion, the bearing edges affect the sound of a drum more than any other factor. The finished bearing edge is a work of art in itself as the shells used have reinforcing hoops and the insides of all drums are sanded to a fine finish offering a beautiful interior of the shell. Aaron also cuts the snare beds as accurate. He will cut any depth and width snare bed depending on your style of playing as this will affect the potential of the response and

capability of the snare drum.

Both Aaron and Jess do the drilling for the installation of the hardware. Two types of lugs are offered; a stand



chrome lug that resembles a Slingerland Sound King lug, or now available, a low mass lug made of solid brass which can remain as a brass finish or chromed or powder coated, depending on the finish you desire. All drum hoops are triple flanged chrome steel. AHA toms come equipped with a suspension mounting system. Floor tom legs and direct mounting of toms are available at no additional charge if you prefer this method. The Nickel throwoff is the strainer of choice on AHA snare drums.

Once the final assembly is completed, each drum is inspected very carefully and hand signed and dated on the inside of each drum. A log of every drum built is kept on file.

Aquarian drum heads are installed on all AHA drums unless specified otherwise. Every drum is tuned and tested to assure the full potential of sound and playability is achieved before leaving for its final destination.

AHA drums and hardware are designed and crafted to provide the highest standards in quality, appearance, style,



and playing performance. AHA takes a great deal of time in handcrafting each and every drum and stands behind each drum with a lifetime warranty.

AHA Drum Company also offers recovering, re-edging, restoration, and parts replacement in their repair shop. They also have a mobile drum repair shop which offers most of the services that the company provides in the shop.

Players using AHA Drums include David Northrup (Travis Tritt), Davis Dunseath (Lee Ann Womack), Brian Pruitt (Tim Rushlow/Mark McGuinn), and Randy Hardison (Nashville session drummer). Thunderbird Rehearsal Studios in Nashville, TN. is equipped exclusively with AHA Drums.

AHA Custom Handcrafted Drums builds great sounding and great looking drumkits and snare drums in the tradition of the old American drum companies.

Aaron and Jess Hughes have succeeded where many custom drum companies fail. Along with building some of the best drums around, they offer personal service that cannot be beat. If ever in the Gainesville, Ga. area, pay these guys a visit. They are the friendliest, sincerest, and most enjoyable and enthusiastic people you will ever come across. They will take the time to find out exactly what your drumming needs and wants are and you will make two new friends.

For more information on **AHA Custom Handcrafted Drums**, call Aaron or Jess Hughes at 770-503-1742 or visit AHA at 250 John Morrow Pkwy., Suite 101, Gainesville, Ga. 30501.