

Zickos Drums

by Bruce Jeansonne

United States Patent # 3,626,458 was awarded to Bill Zickos in 1970 for transparent, acrylic drums. He had produced his first acrylic drum 11 years before, in 1959, and spent years evaluating and experimenting with fiberglass, wood, metal, and acrylic, along with different drum shapes and thicknesses to find the sound he was looking for.

Bill was determined to find a material that would meet his demanding criteria. The shell material was required to respond with minimal effort, resonate equally throughout the full spectrum of sonic vibrations, project all levels of sound without distortion, blend musically with other instruments, deliver balanced sound patterns throughout any performance environment indoors or outdoors, not suffer adverse effects from moisture, and be a material that would enhance the sound as opposed to killing the sound through absorption. In addition, Bill felt that the material should be as pure as possible with the least amount of imperfections, require no coating for any reason, contain no fibers as they would distort the sound (which soon eliminated fiberglass from his experiments), be as smooth as glass, not be effected by the aging process, and be solidly cast. Acrylic was determined above all to be the best possible material and Bill began to make prototypes of his new drum. In 1968, he



The Classic 400

began to build a few sets for local drummers in the Kansas City area, using both Sonor and Camco hardware to outfit his drums. Word quickly spread about the new “clear” drums and the great sound which they produced. *Zickos* was soon the new drum name on the scene.

Back in the mid 1940’s, Bill Zickos was a jazz and big band drummer playing around Kansas City and began teaching in the mid 1950’s. He opened a music store in 1963 in Kansas City and later became one of the first Sonor dealers in the United States. By 1968, orders were beginning to increase for his custom made drums. **Ron Bushy**, of *Iron Butterfly*, became the first “major” drummer to order a set from Zickos, with **Floyd Sneed** of *Three Dog Night* and **Keith Moon** of *The Who* to follow shortly thereafter. Bill gradually phased out teaching to concentrate on building his drums and finally closed his music store permanently in 1971.

With the help of investors, Zickos Drums opened for business full time and introduced their first model, the Zickos "400". The shells and hardware were being made to their specifications at this time, but by the following year Zickos began manufacturing their entire drumkit, along with lugs and hardware. This was a first for a drum company, though others followed in their footsteps, both in the acrylic drums and hardware manufacturing. The shells were produced by using the "wrap" method. This is where a sheet of acrylic is wrapped around a circular mold to form the drum and then seamed together. This method was found to be stronger, with a better sound for the drums, than an extruded, or poured mold method. The Zickos shells would have no color tint. *Evans Drumheads*, which were colored, were used on the drums, with blue being the favorite color of choice.



By the end of 1971, Bill Zickos had decided to leave the company due to differences with the investors. The company continued throughout the 70's and finally ceased operations in 1979. The high cost of petroleum due to the oil embargo of the late 70's was a main factor in this decision. Also, many disco bands had used all brands of acrylic drums, and with that fad over, musicians were hesitant to be seen with these drums, regardless of sound quality.

In the 1980's, Bill kept busy writing books, teaching, and continued to make custom drums though only on an individual basis. He repeatedly received calls for replacement shells and parts for the drums that bore his name, but there was little he

could do. In 1993, he decided to repurchase the name and equipment needed to manufacture the drums again, tracked down many of the original molds and dies for the parts, and by 1995 was ready to go into production once again.

Bill Zickos was always concerned about getting the best possible sound from his drums, in the 70's as well as today. All Zickos drumshells are identical. 6mm thick, about 1/4", wrap around shells, and only the finest materials available are used. The bonding process used on the

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ZICKOS PLAYERS HAVE INCLUDED

Albert Bouchard - Blue Oyster Cult

Joe Pollard - Grass Roots / The Beach Boys

Jim Capaldi - Traffic

Bill Ward - Black Sabbath

Michael Hossack - The Doobie Brothers

Ricky Fataar - The Beach Boys

Ron Bushy - Iron Butterfly

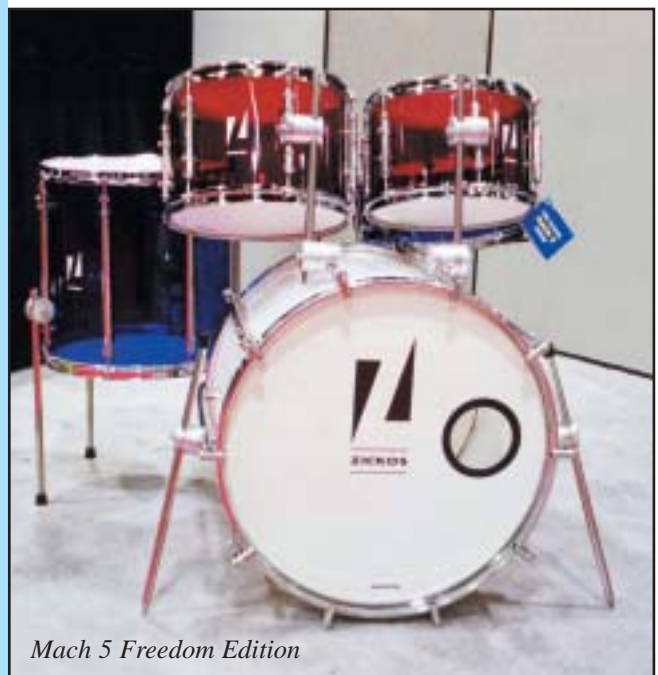
Buddy Miles - Buddy Miles Band

John Stark - James Brown

Joey Coey Covington - Jefferson Airplane

Floyd Sneed - Three Dog Night

Keith Moon - The Who



Mach 5 Freedom Edition

Craig Krampf *continued ...*

It is an old Sonor 6.5 x 14 Rosewood. All the drum does is that low, dark, dry sound. That brings me to another little thought. I have always believed that a drum will let you know where it wants to live sonically. Try different heads, different tunings etc, and normally when you hit the right combination, the drum will get magical...it will let you know what it likes.

In my head, I have always heard toms having a low depth to them. I play 10 x 14, 12 x 15, and 16 x 16 toms. Those are not "power" tom sizes. They are just the next sizes up from the old time standards of 8 x 12 and 9 x 13. My kick is a 16 x 24. Once again, the 24 diameter brings a depth that I feel is part of my sound. You have heard these drums on a lot of albums...everything that I have done since '87. They are starting to get a little worn and so I have been looking and checking out various manufacturers. Something may be put together shortly...still a little premature to talk about it.... *To Be Continued*

Due to space limitations and in order to present the entire interview with Craig Krampf, along with exclusive and rare photos, we are forced to continue this article in the next issue of Vintage Drummer. We strive to present to our readers the most thorough and complete articles, and therefore appreciate your understanding. So in the meantime, pull out your albums and cds, send us your list of songs you can find Craig on, and we will have Craig pull a name from the list received and we will present you with an autographed copy of Vintage Drummer from Craig Krampf!

Zickos Drums *continued...*

shell seam makes it as strong, if not stronger, than the shell itself. The different series, *Stealth* and *Mach 5*, differ only in the lug style used on the drums. Tom mounts can be chosen by the person purchasing a set to accommodate their playing style.

Today, different tints are available for the drums. They have also re-introduced their *Classic* set from the 70's after discovering molds and parts that had thought to be long lost. This set has the original "fat teardrop" lug, original tom mounts, and housing for the floor tom legs and bass drum spurs.

Zickos Drums are definitely back in the drum business with a great line of new drums, a classic set from the past, and years of experience in acrylic drum manufacturing. Their website, www.zickosdrums.com, has their complete line of drums with a great photo section of past and present players on their kits. Clearly a drum for the serious musician.

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