

# Jack Lawton's Question & Answer

How often do you get involved in a vintage drum project and you're just not sure which is the best way to proceed? Is it better to restore or refinish, redress a rough bearing edge or recut a new one, to drill or not to drill, these are some of the questions. Other common dilemmas include lifted seams, ply or glue-ring separations, unwanted holes, painted interiors, bent badges and loose grommets. We'll take a look at some of the more common questions and offer answers, advice, and suggestions.

**Q:** *Will refinishing a vintage drum lower its value?*

**A:** Yes and no. If the drum in question is in very good to near mint condition, but it's just the wrong color, then refinishing will most likely lower the resale value. Also, every time you take original finish off a perfectly good drum, you're decreasing the population of "factory finished" vintage drums left in existence. Now, on the other hand, if the drum is badly faded, discolored, cracked, damaged, painted over, or has extra holes, then you'll probably increase the value of the drum, provided the work is done well and the drum is restored back to original condition.

**Q:** *If I do refinish, should I use double faced tape or contact cement?*

**A:** If you are restoring a drum that was made in the last fifteen years, then possibly the double faced tape would be suitable, if that's the way the finish was originally applied at the factory. It's a quick and easy way to apply drum finish, but "quick and easy" isn't usually the best way. You should always be cautious not to use a double faced tape that could cause shrinkage or discoloration to occur to the plastic finish. If you're rewinding an older drum, where the original finish was glued completely around the circumference of the shell, then the contact cement method would be best. A good contact cement to use is the 3M Fastbond (non-flammable). For best results, make sure that after removing the old finish, you also remove the old glue. Many of the older glues can be stripped off by using a commercial paint and varnish remover, such as "ZAR", or some other brand from your local hardware store. A few of the older glues are water soluble, which can be softened by placing a wet sponge on

a section of the shell prior to scraping. Before you begin the glue removal process, it's a good idea to put masking tape over all the holes on the inside of the shell, to protect the interior finish.

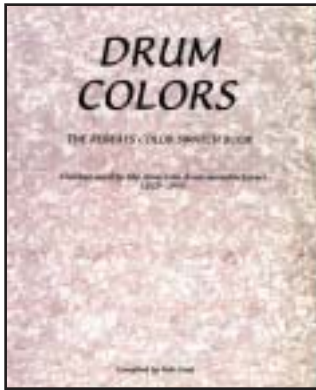
Once you have the shell down to bare wood, you should check the surface for high or low spots. These are mostly caused by excessive tension on the lugs. The high spots can be sanded down and the low spots can be filled in with plastic wood, or some other filler other than wood putty. You want a filler that will harden and can be sanded to match the curvature of the shell. Next, check for extra holes, and plug with fluted dowel pins. Now you're ready to rewrap.

**Q:** *What type of finish should I use?*

**A:** It's best to use a drum finish material that was originally used by the manufacturer of your drum, during the era that drum was produced. There is a large variety of finishes to choose from, including pearls, sparkles, glass glitters, solids, satin flames, metallic and cortex. The most popular seem to be the pearls, sparkles, and glass glitters.

You may need to do a little research to determine the colors and finishes that were available at the time your drum was built, and which ones were used by that particular manufacturer. A great reference book is *DRUM COLORS, The Rebeats Color Swatch Book*, compiled by Rob Cook. It's not a great idea to use, say Slingerland white marine pearl on a Rogers outfit, or Ludwig psychedelic red on a Gretsch outfit, but there are finishes available that were used by practically everyone. Finishes like gloss black or white, pink champagne, green, blue, silver, red and gold sparkle. The satin flame wraps were used by Gretsch, Slingerland, and

Ludwig (Ludwig Standard Series). Cortex finishes were primarily used by Ludwig, and are still available today on their marching and some concert drums. The cortex material is the "post-forming" grade of FORMICA, and can be purchased from building-supply centers.



The Ludwig cortex finishes included Blue, Red, Yellow, Black, White, Marble, Mahogany, Maple, Walnut, and everybody's favorite, Butcherblock. Rogers also used this same type of finish in the 1970's, including such colors as New England White, Ebony, Block, Koa, New Mahogany, New Blond, and Pacific Blue.

When purchasing the plastic variety drum wraps, most suppliers will sell precut pieces so you can buy only what

you need. With the cortex finishes, building supply centers generally sell in large sheet sizes, from 2' x 6' to 4' x 12', which will give you left over material for future projects.

**Q:** Are lacquered drums easier to refinish in pearl or sparkle wraps?

**A:** Yes, to some degree. You still need to strip the lacquer off the shell prior to wrapping. Before you start, however, you may want to check to see how drumheads fit each shell. On many drums from the 1960's, the outside diameter of a lacquered shell was the same as the outside diameter of a wrapped shell. When you remove an existing wrap from the shell, and then replace it with a new wrap of approximately the same thickness, you've not changed the outside diameter. But, when you take a lacquered shell and wrap in pearl or sparkle, you are increasing the outside diameter, sometimes by enough to keep drumheads from fitting. It's always a good idea to place a head on the shell and check if there's enough room for a wrap.

In future issues of *VINTAGE DRUMMER* Magazine, we'll answer more of these types of questions. If you have a particular restoration problem or inquiry that you would like addressed, please feel free to submit them to *Jack Lawton's Question and Answer Column*, c/o *Vintage Drummer*, 770-438-0844, fax# 770-437-9044, email [billyjeansonne@earthlink.net](mailto:billyjeansonne@earthlink.net)



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