

CRAVIOTTO

COPPER DIAMOND SERIES SNARES

by David Ciauro



Johnny Craviotto's drums go hand in hand with expert solid-wood shell craftsmanship, stellar sound and performance, everyday gigging functionality, and striking design. Adrian Kirchler, of the Italy-based AK Drums, is a professional goldsmith and drum enthusiast best known for his expert craftsmanship of metal shells, custom drum engraving, and restoration of antique engraved drums. At the 2004 Amsterdam Drum Show, the two drum gurus met and began to conceptualize a solid nickel-over-brass shell, which would become the first offering in the Craviotto Diamond series. The solid NOB Diamond series snares were released in 2007, in an exclusive limited run of fifty 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 and fifty 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 versions. Not surprisingly, they sold out quickly.

In 2008, Craviotto and Kirchler teamed up again to expand the Diamond line, and last year they unleashed Copper Diamond series snare drums on the world. Just like their predecessors, the drums were limited to only fifty 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 and fifty 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 models, each priced at \$3,250.

A DIFFERENT VOICE

The Copper Diamond shell's construction is inge-

nious. The bearing edges are soldered back at both ends, which creates an edge that's more than ten times the shell's thickness. (The edge is $\frac{3}{8}$ ", and the shell is .8 mm.) According to Kirchler, this thicker edge "makes the shell robust and stiff, so the timbre is higher and has more presence in the midrange and high end."

The astonishingly thin copper shells on these drums are currently the slimmest available. "A thin material along with the right stiffness means increased sensitivity," Kirchler explains. Solid shells typically make for denser drums, but the paper-thin design makes these snares relatively lightweight and thus not cumbersome to lug around to gigs, which is Craviotto's aim for all of its drums—to be played.

Both of these snares felt and sounded best in the middle to high-end range; they were in the tonal vicinity of brass shells but sounded a bit more eccentric. Even when I had the drums tuned fairly tightly, the shells had pronounced meatier frequencies and the tone was relatively dry when compared with that of brass. If brass snares are trumpets, copper snares are French horns—less triumphant sounding and darker, with warmer atmospheric tone

colors and more dimension.

Although the copper Craviottos were very playable, their application might be more occasional, or they might appeal more to drummers with sophisticated ears that can discern between the textural and tonal nuances of copper versus those of other metals. They gave off a vibe that would lend itself to moodier music, regardless of the genre.

The tighter I tuned both drums, the more the copper shells' tones cut through. The less tension on the batter head, the more the sound of the head came into play, accentuated by the shells' darker and drier nuances.

ON THE JOB

I gigged with both snares a few times, and they did not disappoint. As I hinted at earlier, they had a colorful individuality. But the timbre was subtle enough that the drums remained versatile. In fact, some of the gigs I played them on were with Top 40 bands, and I found a tuning just outside their sweet spots that worked quite well. Both drums felt right at home with my vintage kit and were powerful enough to cut through and drive the band without being too brash (a nice plus of the thinness of the copper shells).

TUNING

It took some time to find each drum's sweet spot, but once I homed in on it, it was obvious. Tuning the top and bottom heads tight to the point of choking and then backing off the tension on both heads until they could breathe led to a round, warm, responsive sound that I simply loved. Overtones were very full in the middle to higher frequencies but decayed pleasantly. Only on one occasion did I need to apply some Moongel to

MODERN-RUSTIC

The rustic appearance of Copper Diamond series shells gives the innovative and intricately designed drums an old-world look, but these models also include some modern accents.

The handcrafted solid-copper shells are equipped with attractive diamond-shaped tube lugs; a newly designed but vintage-inspired Craviotto/AK three-point diamond strainer; beautifully shaped snare beds; a nickel-plated diamond badge; ten-hole, 2.3 mm triple-flange steel hoops; high-carbon snare wires; and a Remo coated Ambassador batter head. The drums come with a letter of authenticity signed by Johnny Craviotto and are backed by Craviotto's five-year limited warranty.

dampen the sound for a particular room. The added depth of the 6¹/₂x14 gave the drum a bit more bark and a wider sweet spot, but both models—when tuned in their respective zones—possessed a unique grace.

THE AGING PROCESS

My only concern with a copper drum was how its appearance would change over time. We've all examined a pocketful of loose change and found pennies that have turned green. I went to the source and asked Kirchler for some insight into the aging of these drums. The natural aging/patina

process of copper is to darken, and what makes these snares one of a kind is that each model will take on its own appearance over time, depending on how much it is handled. As Kirchler says, "Every drum 'lives' with its owner and can tell stories." Before being shipped, each shell is saturated in Italian olive oil, which, according to Kirchler, slows the aging/patina process slightly.

What causes copper to green is exposure to salty liquids or acids such as rain or pollution. So if the drums are cared for properly and kept away from such harmful elements, they should not turn green from handling. Rather, the color should

become deeper and darker.

CONCLUSION

Designed to offer a different voice within a drummer's snare drum arsenal, the Copper Diamond snares will surely be snatched up quickly (if not already), relegating collectors and aficionados to stalking eBay with fingers crossed, waiting for a chance to pounce. These drums look great, sound great, and—for the time being—remain reasonably attainable for working drummers.

craviottodrums.com

