REBEATS

219 Prospect
P.O. Box 6
Alma, Michigan 48801
989-463-4757 fax 989-463-6545
email: Rebeats@rebeats.com
website: www.rebeats.com

Issue #23
Summer2002

Your last issue? Yes ☐ No ☐

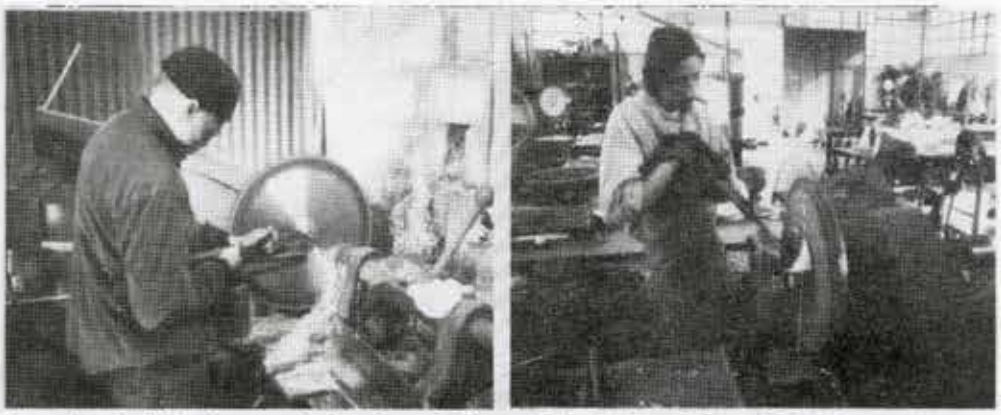
The Rebeats newsletter is published on a loose schedule (approximately 2 times per year),the newsletter is sold in increments of two: sending $8.00 ($12.00 if you live outside the U.S.) at any time will get you the next two issues. The box above this message indicates if this is the last issue in your paid subscription.

CYMBAL ISSUE

An ancient fountain in Florence, Italy; the water emerges from the cymbal player's penis.

Although it is somewhat embarrassing, I must admit that I once thought cymbals were invented in 1623 in Istanbul by Avedis Zildjian and evolved from there. I even tried to document the link between Turkey and Italy, having found mention in a 1924 Leedy catalog that Leedy was buying Turkish cymbals made in Italy by craftsmen who immigrated from Turkey to Italy. Luigi Tronci of UFIP quite patiently pointed out to me that Italian craftsmen have been making bells and cymbals out of bronze for generations. When I started to pay attention, I realized the Italian cymbal industry is not hundreds, but thousands of years old.

A mosaic from the excavations at Pompeii, dating it to no later that 79 A.D.; the guy in the middle is playing small cup cymbals.

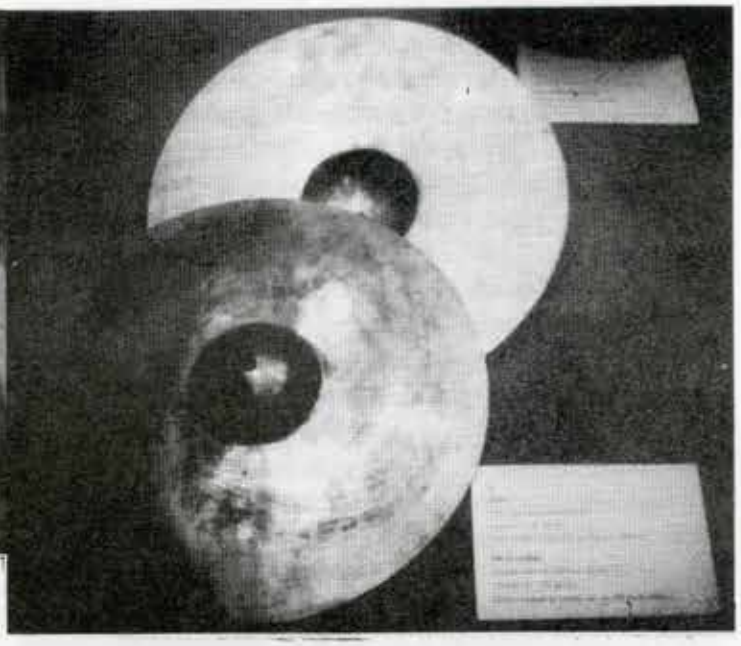


Two of today's Italian cymbal makers: Roberto Spizzichino (left) and Luigi Tronci's son (right) continue a tradition of craftsmenship that is thousands of years old.

UFIP has deep roots; Tuscan cymbal makers united in 1931 to establish UFIP. (Tronci, Biasei, Benti from Pistoia. Rosati from Florence.)

17th CENTURY ITALIAN AND TURKISH CYMBALS

"Cymbali de Santa Croce, 1659"



Trophies from the Battle of Chocim, 1621 or 1673

James Blades' book *Percussion Instruments And Their History* goes into further detail on ancient cymbals and shows a variety of metal bowls and discs from across the millenia. It is clear that by the 1600s cymbals had evolved into the proportions of "today's" cymbals in both Italy and Turkey. The Italian cymbals of St Croce , 1659, (above left) can be seen today in the Vatican museum in Rome. The Turkish cymbals from the Battle of Chocim (above right) were used in a Turkish military campaign in which the Ottoman army suffered a disasterous defeat to Poland at the battle of Chocim. (It is not clear which battle these cymbals are from, 1621 or 1673; both were Ottoman disasters resulting in over 30,000 casualties.)They left the battlefield as spoils of war and eventually were displayed in the District Museum of Tarnow (Poland). The cymbals were part of an exhibit loaned to the Turkish government for a special exhibit in 2000 and were in Istanbul when I took the photograph above. It is possible that these cymbals might actually have been made by Avedis Zildjian, or even his father Kerope I, who was chief cauldron maker to the Sultan and by some accounts made cymbals before Avedis. The huge bronze cauldrons used to prepare meals for the Janissaries (troops) can be seen today in the Topkapi Palace museum in Istanbul. They occasionally served as percussion instruments also; when the Janissaries were unhappy enough to spill the huge cauldrons and beat on the bottoms, it meant they were about to revolt.

It is not too much of a stretch to speculate whether the Vatican cymbals were made by an ancester of today's UFIP family. It is documented that they were "in the neighborhood" and in the music business within a generation: the organ pipes shown at right were made by an Antonio and Filippo Tronci in 1745.

Organ pipes made by the Tronci family, Pistoia, Italy, 1745

The First Turkish Split

(The reader is encouraged to have Pinksterboer's Zildjian family tree, page 140 *The Cymbal Book*, at hand; it will make this much easier to follow!)

There are two versions of the earliest beginnings of Zildjian. One has Kerope I (father of Avedis I), establishing the first cymbal factory in 1623. The other has Avedis Zildjian I responsible for perfecting the secret process and setting up the factory in 1623. Which of the two is correct is somewhat of a moot point, as in each version the family passes the secret on from generation to generation. The thread seems to be lost in all accounts for several hundred years, until the days of Haroutian I and his sons Avedis II & Kerope II. Avedis II's son Aram took his place in the succession, but was forced to flee the country in the wake of a failed assasination attempt on the Sultan. He immigrated to Bucharest where he made cymbals, while Kerope II's daughter Victoria took the reins of the operation in Istanbul, becoming the first female caretaker of the secret.

British drum historian Ken Ellender brought to my attention a confusing yet fascinating article, "The Secret", from a 1927 issue of *Rhythm* magazine. The article, written by a British visitor to Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1927, ignores altogether any mention of Aram or Avedis. "The Zildjians of today," says the article, "are a happy family of three. There is Madame Zildjian, head of the firm, there is V. Zildjian who will follow in due course in her footsteps, and finally M. Zildjian, his younger brother."

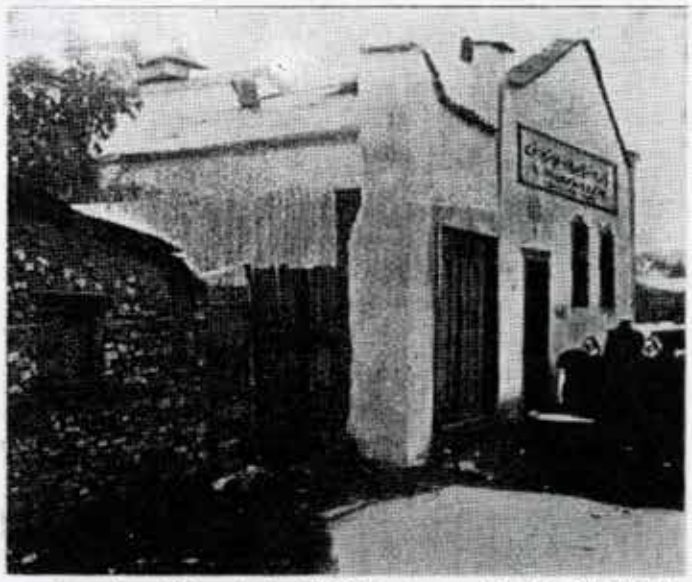
It is not clear whether Aram ever returned to Istanbul from Bucharest before deciding to retire, writing (in 1927) to his nephew Avedis III in Boston that it was time for him to take over. At any rate, Avedis III did learn the secret from Aram and left it to sons Robert (SABIAN) and Armand. Armand has since passed the secret on to daughter Craigie, only the second woman to be entrusted with it.

"Madame Zildjian"
Victoria, daughter of Kerope II
Head of the Firm and "Sole Holder Of The Secret Process" in 1927.

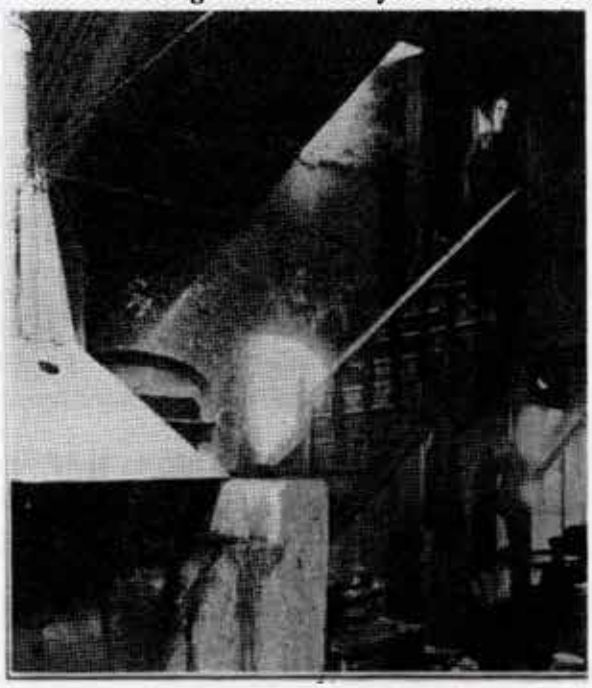
"V. Zildjian"
"1st Heir To the Secret" in 1927
This was actually Vahan Yuzbashian; he married Kerope II's daughter Filor and changed his name to Zildjian. Although he was "next in line", the secret apparently was instead passed to his nephew Mikhal.

"M. Zildjian"
Mikhal Dulgaryian, (1906–1979) whose father Gabriel married Akabi Zildjian, Victoria's sister. Mikhal was therefore Vahan's nephew and also changed his name to Zildjian. This is the man responsible for most of the cymbals known to today's collectors as "old K's".

Although the American Zildjian company bought the "K. Zildjian" company and closed it (moving some workers, including Mikhal's nephew Gabe, to Meductic, Canada), former workers and their relatives retained possession of the secret. There have since been further splits with employees and their relatives, resulting in a number of companies in Istanbul.



Exterior of the original 1623 factory as it looked in 1927.



The cellar where the alloy was prepared for over 300 years. The figure at the top of the stairs is Madame Zildjian.

THE SECRET

I've accumulated quite a number of broken cymbals over the years, not so much because I am collecting them as because I've simply neglected to throw them out. Sonically they are worthless, but so much has been made of the "secret formula" that it seemed irresponsible to discard this expensive and exotic metal. Paiste recently exhibited snare drums and even a whole outfit made from recast 2002-series bronze. I began to fantasize about snare drums made from melted-down A. Zildjian's I have stacked up in the garage. I wrote to a friend in New Jersey who has a home foundry, Eddie Dowd (AKA The Leedy Nut). Here is his reply: "I do have some experience in melting down old cymbals. They are made of about 80% copper and the remainder in tin. They did throw in a smattering of zinc now and then to be cheap. The furnace required to melt them down has to get up to about 2200 degrees. I have found that you get an awful lot of white smoke, zinc chills, and the resulting alloy is not the same color or strength or timbre as the original. It seems that the tin and zinc distills out of the old alloy during the melting process and you wind up with more copper than anything else. I gave up on trying to make anything out of old Zildjians; I found that it is really nothing more than yellow bronze and it makes some nice looking ashtrays and nice bar stock for my lathe."

Most of the cymbal manufacturers of today freely divulge the base metals in their alloys and even the percentages; most premium cast cymbals are 80% copper, 20% tin, and trace elements of silver. The first half of the closely guarded industry secret is exactly how the elements are combined. Consider a cake made from scratch; knowing the ingredients without having a recipe does you no good. You can't just mix everything up and bake it; a key to success is doing things in the right order. The second half of the secret is in the treatment of the castings. The cast metal must be repeatedly heated and rolled, tempered, hammered, and lathed. Roberto Spizzichino works his magic with Wuhan castings; he can create many different "flavors" and in the course of his experiments created one that surprised him. It so satisfied him that he told me shortly after it's development that all his cymbals in the future would be this type. His original mission was to recreate the old K sound, but he recognized the inherit difficulty with such a project. If you create a cymbal today that sounds just like a 50-year-old K, what will your cymbal sound like 50 years from now? Will it still sound like the K, which will then be 100 years old?

THE FUTURE OF THE SECRET

Italian production- The various Italian cymbal-making families seem to have successfully merged and UFIP is maintaining their control. I do not see an immediate change in that situation. (Roberto Spizzichino is an independant Italian craftsman with no employees, selling his own production.)

Turkish production- There have been two hugely significant events that splintered the Turkish cymbal industry. The first was when production was moved to America in 1927 by Aram and Avedis III while Turkish craftsmen continued to make cymbals in Turkey. The second was when the Zildjian family split up. Robert Zildjian and his family got the Canadian production facility and have developed Sabian into a position of co-dominance (with Zildjian, which Robert's brother Armand developed) of huge segments of the cymbal market. Production secrets at both firms are closely guarded and it seems unlikely that competitors will branch out from within. The Turkish cymbalmakers of Turkey, however, are another matter. The first time I visited Istanbul, there was just one cymbal company, being operated by two former employees of the late Mikhal Zildjian. Since that time the company has splintered into offshoots by relatives and former employees, resulting in at least three distinct manufacturers making cymbals with at least five trade names. The names may change, but the market position of the Turkish cymbalmakers as a whole probably will remain fairly constant.

Chinese production- Spizzichino's work clearly demonstrates that the Chinese cymbal makers have the first half of the secret down very well; they are producing castings with tremendous potential. In just the last couple of years, the Chinese have taken giant steps in processing the castings; the Wuhan series from Universal Percussion illustrates that.

The Chinese who will effect the most dramatic changes in the cymbal marketplace in the next few decades. They will be gearing up to meet the exploding domestic demand for western-style cymbals. Just the droppings from such massive production could be a glut on the western market. If the quality of their cymbals continues to improve, the Chinese pricing will wreak havoc with the western cymbal market.

Cymbal pricing- There are many reasons why the prices of premium cast cymbals have risen over the last few decades. Inflation is one factor; another is that increased competition has led to huge ad budgets. It costs unbelievable amounts of money to maintain endorser rosters, exhibit at all the trade shows, produce catalogs, fliers, stickers, etc., not to mention ads in the drum press and general music press... Then there are the increasing costs of doing business; labor, utilities, EPA compliance, etc. These "other" costs are why I predict the Chinese production will cause nightmares for western cymbal manufacturers– they are practically nonexistent in China. An interesting sidebar is the **decreased cost of raw materials**. Copper prices hit a 12-year low in 1996, at $.61/lb. (The 1995 price was $1.37/lb. The April 1, 2002 price was $.76/lb.) Part of the reason was overproduction; several new mines in South American contributed to that problem. Changes in the price of the other major ingredient, tin, are even more dramatic. In 1999 tin was selling for less than 10% of what it had in 1985! Why? It seems that in the years preceding 1985 there was a cartel of major tin producers who managed to control the market pricing. In 1985 the cartel collapsed, resulting in an immediate crash in tin prices to roughly the current levels. The Russians also contributed to the price drop, releasing thousands of tons onto an already weak market in the late 1990s.

REBEATS P.O. Box 6, Alma, MI 48801 517-463-4757

Qty	Catalog #	Description	Price
		Mdse Total	
		Michigan residents 6%sales tax	
		Shipping & Handling	$5.00
		UPS Shipment, add $1.50	
		Total	

☐ Check or M.O. (USD) enclosed
☐ Send UPS COD (add $4.75 COD charge)
VISA ☐ MC ☐ Expiration ___/___

Card # ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Name on card: _____

Ship to:

Name _____

Address _____

City: _____ State: ___ Zip: _____

Country: _____

Orders shipped parcel post, book rate. For UPS shipment add $1.50 to the $5.00 standard p&h charge. FOREIGN SHIPMENTS: $5.00 handling charge plus actual shipping charges will be added to your VISA or MC card, or contact us for a quote. Be sure to specify air mail, surface mail, or UPS.

LINKS

www.Trixondrums.de The ultimate Trixon site!!!
www.drumsmith.com a forum; maintenance(SP), collecting, history, etc.
www.sonor.de The official Sonor drum site, with links.
www.sonormuseum.com Sonor catalog pages, drums, sonor geek listing
www.drumcenter.com Harry Cangany's site, with vintage drum forum. Recent topics have included: detailed finish application, Speed King pedal reconstruction, drumshow comments, online auction items, and more.
www.Atlantavintagedrums.com Kits, snares, singles, books, links, etc etc etc.
There are more links at the Rebeats site; click on Links at the left of the home page!!

LINKS

NATURAL SKIN DRUM HEADS

By June of 2002 we expect further news regarding our skin head product offerings; watch the website for details. From the Rebeats home page, click on "Calfskin Heads" in the bar at the left.

In the meantime we offer either a very high grade calf head from Ireland's Vellum & Parchment Works, and goatskin heads from Earthtone. Although goat has traditionally been considered less durable than calfskin, the Earthtone heads, made in South American, are quite heavy. We suggest the Irish heads for symphonic players, Earthtone for rock, pop, and most jazz.

	10"	12"	13"	14"	15"	16"	18"
Earthtone:	30.00	35.00	37.00	39.00	NA	46.00	60.00
Irish:	78.00	82.00	88.00	104.00	112.00	120.00	NA
Irish untucked:	42.00	42.00	45.00	52.00	52.00	62.00	NA

NSMDeluxe

Rebeats is one of the select few dealers for John Aldridge's new line of Black Beauties. These drums are available with custom engraving or several standard engraving patterns, 8 or 10 tube lugs, 4 or 5.5" shells. Lead time is about 6 months, prices are in the $1,000.00 neighborhood; call for a quote!

COLLECTING OUT OF CONTROL: BANJO PASSION LEADS TO FELONY CONVICTION

Back when I was researching the Leedy book, my quest for information about Leedy banjos led me to Mr. Akira Tsumura's book, *1001 Banjos*. The book was basically Mr. Tsumura's personal collection, documented for posterity. The collection was so over-the-top that even the book is a collector's item and symbol of collecting gone mad. The book reportedly cost $800.00 per copy to produce, and sold for $500.00 per copy when released. The $300.00 loss per copy was neccessary because $500.00 was the highest sale price the market would bear at the time. (Today it is difficult to find a copy of the 18-lb 904-page book for under $1,000.00.)

I wondered at the time how it was possible for one individual to be so fabulously wealthy that he could afford hundreds and hundreds of the rarest and most expensive banjos on the planet. The answer now appears to be that he was not. The Mainichi Daily News reported in April of 2000 that Mr. Tsumura (then 64), former president of Tsumura & Co., a Japanese medicine manufacturer, was convicted of using company funds for private purposes. He was given a three-year prison term. The judge suspended the sentence, citing the fact that Tsumura had earlier donated personal assets to the company and was therefore responsible for it's growth in the first place. As for the collection, it is no more. Many of the prize instruments had to be sold.