

Imperial Restoration

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This is a snare drum that caught my eye on Ebay. It's a Swiss drum made by Imperial Drums of Switzerland.

I was attracted by its unique character and the extended snare set up that it had. After viewing it several times, I felt I HAD TO HAVE IT! It was being sold by someone in the UK, who I found out bought it from an old jazz drummer who had it forever. It took seemingly forever and cost me a lot to get it, but finally, a month later it arrived. I was as excited as a little kid getting a new bike!

As soon as I got

it, I took pictures of it, then disassembled it and took pictures of its features. It turns out to have what looks to me like a mahogany ply shell with solid oak rerings. This shell has a name stamped into it which I never found out anything about, but would still love to know. After a LOT of searching, I found a shop in Dayton Ohio that would take on the task of nickel plating all the hardware, which is a pretty complicated procedure involving several phases.

While the hardware was being plated, I posted the pictures on several drum builders' forums to get opinions of what the final product of this rebuild should look like. I got MANY opinions ranging from 'keep it original' to 'bright green satin flame wrap' to 'powdercoat everything.' Of course, I listened to no one's advice, as usual (ask my wife.)



I saw some Karelean Burl veneer on one of the many web-sites I keep an eye on, and ordered it with the intention of possibly using it on the old drum. My concern was that since the hardware is so spectacular, would it trash it up to put on a spectacular veneer. I decided to go for it. The veneering went well and I had a spectacular shell



ready for hardware. When I picked up the hardware, I was in awe at the beauty of it. When I got home, I would hold the lugs up to the shell trying to visualize the end product – MORE EXCITEMENT!! In the meantime, I found out the heads that came on the drum were actually 14.25”, which NO ONE HAD, and since the resonant head was wasted when I got it, it needed to be replaced. So I called the major drumhead companies to see if anyone would make me custom sized heads for it; only Remo would, so I sent them the original resonant head to use as a guide.

I was bound and determined to bring this beauty back to life! After much detailed problem solving on several matters and some \$\$ invested, I finally got the old Imperial drum re-



assembled and now own a TOTALLY UNIQUE drum that stuns anyone who sees it. The Karelean veneer worked beautifully with the hardware. I'm still speechless looking at it, and can't wait to get that resonant head on it and play it in the 3 bands I play in. I emailed the owner of Imperial Drums only a picture of it with no text message and he emailed me a message he had to have translated, saying that the drum is wunderschon (Wonderful!!!). I'm proud as a new daddy of my 'New Vintage' drum!!!

