



PICKING STICKS

BY JOSH GOTTRY

Here are a few tips for those of you who never seem to come home from the music store with a pair of sticks that you're actually happy with. While I can't guarantee you a perfect pair, these suggestions will hopefully at least make an improvement.

PICK A PECK OF STICKS?!?

Don't just pick up one pair and buy them. The best percussionists will grab a dozen or more to compare and make sure they get the best pair. Also, don't assume a package contains two identical sticks.

CHECK THEM TWICE

Roll all the sticks on a flat surface to check for imperfections. You should easily be able to notice warped sticks and uneven tapers.

PITCH YOUR STICKS

This is probably the most common mistake. Remember that wood resonates and sticks do have a pitch. This pitch will be evident when striking the drum so a matched pair is crucial. The closer the pitch of your sticks, the more even the sound when you play. To "pitch" the sticks, hold one stick tightly in your hand. Toss another stick lightly against it, right in the place where the stick starts to taper. The pitch you hear is the pitch of the stick you tossed. Line up all the sticks you pitched from low to high and pick the two that are closest in pitch. A decent pair of sticks will be easily within a half-step and ideally will be identical in pitch.

THE RIGHT STICK FOR THE JOB

Drumsticks can be used for anything from concert or marching snare drums, to drumset, to bongos, wood blocks, or a number of other percussion instruments. The stick you choose will impact the sound you produce on that instrument. The wrong stick choice can result in an inappropriate sound, difficulty in playing the passage, or even damage the instrument. Make sure to talk to a band director or private teacher regarding specific stick recommendations. Below you'll find some of my general suggestions.

Drum Set

Pro-Mark 727N - Oak, Nylon Tip

Concert Snare Drum

Pro-Mark SD1 - Maple, Wood Tip

Marching Snare Drum

Pro-Mark DC1 - Jeff Moore, Wood or Nylon Tip

Student Snare Drum

SD-1F - American Hickory, Wood Tip



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