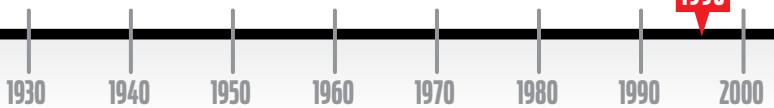


Time Capsule

By Donn Bennett



The Mysterious Tale Of Tony Williams' 1996 Zildjians

In 1996, the Avedis Zildjian cymbal company ran a promotion featuring one of its top endorsers, the legendary drummer Tony Williams. From the time he was first introduced to the jazz world at the tender age of 17 while supporting Miles Davis through the end of his career, Williams was always an innovator who pushed the limits of drumming and the jazz-fusion idiom. This made him the perfect representative for Zildjian, which prided itself on its high standards and inspirational concepts.

The promotion centered around a contest in which the winner would get the opportunity to visit the Zildjian factory and hand pick a set of cymbals with the help of Williams. However, Williams died very unexpectedly during routine surgery in early 1997, before the

contest winner had been chosen, leaving the jazz world stunned and Zildjian unable to fulfill its promised prize.

In the commotion following Williams' passing it appeared that the contest had been forgotten, but several months later a delivery arrived at the home of one lucky entrant. In the box was this set of Zildjian cymbals: a 22" K Ride and a pair of 15" New Beat hi-hats, all hand autographed by Williams. The cymbals were consistent with the larger and heavier cymbals Williams had been using in the final stages of his career, but there was no explanation of the origin of the cymbal set.

When I acquired the cymbals, I asked Zildjian's artist relations manager Aaron Jackson if he could help me discover the story behind the set. Over the years, Jackson has

helped me trace the history of several artists' cymbals, and was able to confirm that the promotion had occurred just prior to the time of Williams' death. But unfortunately, as more than 15 years had passed since the promotion had concluded, nobody at Zildjian could recall any more information about the cymbals.

I really enjoy doing detective work and uncovering information about historic pieces of drum gear. But sometimes it can be equally enjoyable when part of the story remains untold, like the origin of this unusual cymbal set. Enjoy the mystery.

Donn Bennett is a world-renowned collector and dealer of rare and vintage drums. His collection is on display at Donn Bennett Drum Studio in Bellevue, Washington. donn@bennettdrums.com

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