

Time Capsule

By Donn Bennett

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020



The Cool Caddy In Hal Blaine's Gear Locker

Hal Blaine is believed to be one of the world's most recorded musicians. Between the 1950s and the 1980s, he played on countless thousands of tracks with such artists as Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, Phil Spector, The Beach Boys, John Lennon, Neil Diamond, and the list goes on. During this period, he racked up 150 Top 10 hits, including 40 #1 singles.

Between 1966 and 1971 he played on the Grammy Awards' Record Of The Year for six consecutive years. To say that Hal Blaine was in high demand would be a dramatic understatement. For decades, he worked constantly, playing on as many as five different sessions per day. His discography is loaded with some of the most significant recordings of our time.

During the 1960s and '70s, Blaine's most prolific period, he played various configurations of a blue sparkle Ludwig drum set. By the 1980s, his pace slowed to a degree, but Blaine still worked steadily both live and in the studio. Some of the artists he worked with in this period included John Denver, J.J. Cale, Emmylou Harris, Johnny Cash, and Nancy Sinatra.

Blaine also became a very popular clinician. During this time, he entered an

endorsement agreement with the Pearl drum company, which supplied him with this month's featured drum set. They were considered the state of the art at the time, with all maple shells, heavyweight hardware, and a beautiful White Marine Pearl finish. The set includes a 22" x 16" bass drum; a 14" x 6.5" free-floating brass snare drum; and 12" x 10", 13" x 11", and 16" x 16" toms.

It's doubtful that he ever used the 12" tom. Every photo I've ever seen of him playing this set shows the single 13" tom mounted on Blaine's left-hand side. The bass drum features Blaine's legendary "Hal Blaine Strikes Again" logo, which was copied from a rubber stamp Blaine used to identify sheet music he had played on, and eventually became his unofficial trademark.

The bass drum also features a calfskin batter head with a piece of foam weather stripping attached to the inside, in a sort of amoeba shaped pattern, which acted as a muffler (see inset photo above). It was the brainchild of Blaine's longtime friend and drum tech, Rick Faucher, who deserves credit for inventing numerous drum accessories that have since become

commonplace in the drum industry. I plan on writing a column in the near future devoted to Faucher and several of his innovations.

I once read an interview where Blaine compared playing this Pearl set to driving a Cadillac, while his old Ludwigs were more like driving a Mustang. The Pearls were big, strong, and powerful while the Ludwigs were lighter and more nimble. Both are great sets, but very different from each other.

I acquired the Pearl set directly from Blaine in the late 1990s. He had just entered into a new endorsement agreement with the Mapex drum company and planned to donate the set to a local elementary school band. Having witnessed firsthand the torture and abuse elementary school drummers can inflict on a drum set, I offered to buy this set. In short order, it was on display in my drum shop near Seattle where they can still be seen today.

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