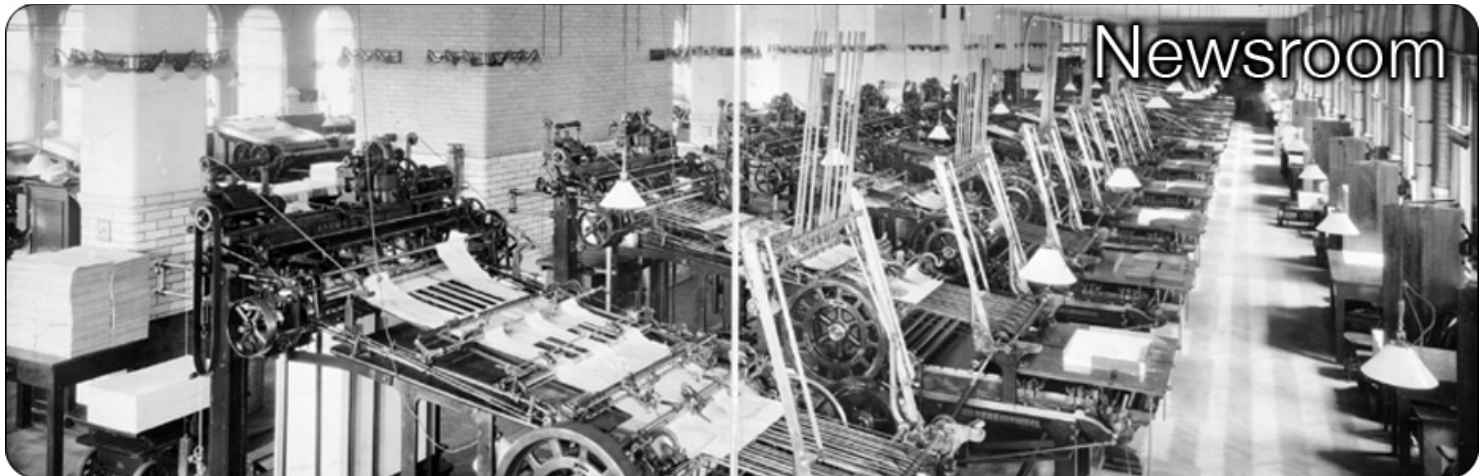


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The 2010 DW Dealer Factory Tour by Rich Mangicaro

When Drum Workshop decides to produce an event, no stone is left unturned. Everything is first-rate and nothing is left to chance. It's the same philosophy they practice when making drums. Their instruments are absolutely of the highest quality and result from a strong drive for perfection. So, it's not surprising that their recent 2010 Dealer Factory Tour possessed all these qualities...and more.

Anyone lucky enough to have taken a DW factory tour knows that this is no ordinary drum factory. In every area of the manufacturing process, DW's attention to detail is unparalleled. From the smallest bolt to the largest shell, each item is crafted with precision and care and each department takes extreme pride in their specific job. Many of the factory employees have been there for years and their company loyalty and devotion are evident on their faces. Exchanges between Executive Vice President and tour guide, John Good, and his staff were inspiring to say the least. He's obviously proud of their work and of their relationship and it shows. The bond between employer and employee is what successful companies are made of, and what makes DW a true family operation; everyone there feels intimately invested in DW's success.

The 2010 Dealer Factory Tour was the first that DW had hosted at this particular Oxnard, California facility. Not since the early 90's had DW invited its independent retailers to see where all of their products are designed and many of them are manufactured. Needless to say, this visit was long overdue. The current facility now makes its own shells, utilizing many different types of wood, scouted meticulously around the world by John Good himself. Anyone who knows John knows that wood is his passion and he finds the most beautiful, exotic and unique selections to make his drums. The facility also houses a state-of-the-art recording and film studio, the brainchild of DW Founder, Don Lombardi, who is also the creator of DrumChannel.com. On this day, the studio would serve as a venue to hear DW drums in a studio environment, something that could never happen at a typical tradeshow.

Kudos goes out to DW's Education & Events Manager, Juels Thomas, for her fluid facilitation of the day's events. The tour began in the studio, with a DVD presentation of some of DW's world-renown artists in both interview and performance. Highlighted in the video was DW's new Performance Series, a line of high-quality production drums. Each artist spoke highly about their instruments and the company itself, another testament to DW's drummer-friendly reputation. Hosting the introduction for the tour was DW's Vice President of Sales, Jim DeStefano, who welcomed various dealers from around the United States and Canada. This was followed by a mini drum shell clinic by John Good. John demonstrated the differences in pitch between various shells and how the construction, grain orientation, various wood choices and specific shell configuration influence the drum's overall sound. Known for his masterful pitch-matching technique, also known as Timbre Matching, John's demonstration was fascinating and educational, a perfect lead-in to the detail-oriented manufacturing process we were about to witness first hand.

John then introduced Don Lombardi, who further explained the reasons behind Timbre Matching and many of DW's other proprietary drum-making ideas. Mr. Lombardi put it best, "We don't just make

drums...we create them. People may think of us as a big company, but after you take the tour, you'll see just how custom our process is and that we've been able to maintain that same custom shop feel, throughout our growth."

Next to the studio, part of the warehouse was setup like a mini-trade show floor complete with light rigs, displays and risers. Drum kits, hardware and pedals were all accessible for the dealers to view, play and tweak. The main focus was their new Performance Series drums. Several different set-ups were shown in all five lacquer finishes, showing off their custom-inspired possibilities. The trade show floor even included a customized hot rod on display, a California-appropriate Woody surf mobile, complete with DW Exotic Twisted Olive inlays and matching Collector's series Exotic Olive SSC kit, talk about custom!



As the program continued, we walked from the trade show floor to Terry Bozzio's secret hideaway. Terry now holds an office at the DW factory, where he proudly displays one of his massive drumsets and museum-like collection of mementos from a celebrated music career. There, the group was treated to an overview of Terry's incredible set-up and a short, impromptu performance! Terry welcomed everyone and extended photo opps to all. We were now on our way to the next stop, the nearby Drum Channel recording studio's control booth.

Scott Donnell, DW's Director of Marketing, made the faux-recording session introduction and then explained what everyone was about to hear. On hand for the day were session greats John, JR, Robinson and Curt Bisquera. Each artist played kits that were completely miked up with no effects and flat EQ, this was done intentionally so the pure sound of the drums could be heard. Curt played a stunning Collector's Series Exotic SSC Series kit and JR played one of the new Performance Series sets, giving the dealers a first-hand listening experience with the new HVX shells. HVX is DW's latest shell technology and is exclusive to Performance Series. The shells are made from horizontal, vertical and diagonal plies of DW's hand-selected maple, a combination of DW's latest shell technology, all in one drum shell. The hands-on studio experience was a rare treat for dealers, allowing them not only to hear the drums in a state-of-the-art studio, but also to hear them played by two of the industry's most recorded drummers.



Next, we all walked across the street to the factory's lacquer and painting area. As we viewed the inner workings of the paint area, John explained the Lacquer and Satin processes in detail. When discussing Graphics, John introduced the group to Louie Garcia, DW's resident air-brush artist and Lead Lacquer Foreman. Louie showed us some of his incredible one-of-a-kind work and even displayed a new custom paint job for Neil Peart, as well as a very special drumset designed for former President Bill Clinton. Again, we were reminded that few drum companies possess such a talented and dedicated team of artisans.

As we entered the sanding room we were greeted with a cacophony of factory noises derived from hand sanders, large belt sanders and precision router tables. We were all wearing headsets so John didn't have to shout over the production clamor. He produced a gorgeous raw drum shell; an Exotic Private Reserve Exotic called Waterfall Bubinga. This particular specimen was made from an African log that was 800 years old and over 8 feet in diameter! No, he didn't have it cut down, but obtained it after it fell naturally! We then witnessed their elaborate drilling process. A newly-installed CNC, or Computer Numerically Controlled multiple drilling machine, precisely turned each shell as a German-made drill head perfectly drilled each hole for lugs, badges and other drum hardware. From there, we viewed John's most beloved area, his wood collection. John travels to all corners of the globe to seek out unique woods, from the rare and unusual to more common names like maple, birch and walnut. Like creating a fine wine, John has spent literally decades researching each wood species' sonic qualities and visual potential; his craft improves over time as his knowledge and experience takes him to new and exciting places in the world of custom drum making. It was truly exciting to experience his passion for his craft on his home turf.



John explained that what we were about to see was the jewel of the DW factory, the wood shop. This is where the shells are made from veneer that is less than a 1/36 of an inch thick and this is what makes DW stand out from the competition. Sonic customization has become DW's calling card over the past few years. Here, DW makes



their own plywood using hand-selected North American Hard Rock Maple, a host of jaw-dropping Exotics woods, proprietary glues and a staff of well-trained, enthusiastic craftsmen. From the plywood stage, each sheet is categorized into inner, outer and core sheets by the shell's diameter. Adhesive is applied and floppy sheets of veneer are hand-rolled and placed in into heated shell presses under 3,100 pounds of pressure per square inch at over 200 degrees. It was at this stage that the dealers each had the chance to roll their own DW shell. When we saw this done by a professional, he made it look easy. Well, it wasn't! With good laughs all around, we had the chance to take a stab. The final step of "raw shell making" was a process aptly called Cool Tempering. John devised this ingenious procedure to cure the shells while still in their heated state. Each shell is placed in a cold press, which crystallizes the adhesive, making it strong and sturdy. Interesting to note, only two years prior, they didn't have this cooling machine and had to air-dry the shells, thus losing valuable time and some shells as well; another DW-patented advancement.

Next up, we strolled to the FinishPly area where Italian-made laminates in a myriad of colors and patterns are meticulously applied to each shell. These are DW's most popular custom finishes due to their inherent durability and more affordable price. Then, we moved on to Final Assembly. As the name would suggest, this is where drum hardware, badges, hoops, mounts, heads and other essential parts are added to the finished drum shells. A wide range of custom drum hardware colors were on display, from traditional chrome, to black chrome, satin chrome, black nickel and even actual 24 karat gold. This was where we could see the range of DW's custom options in one Willy Wonka-like place.



From the factory floor, we took a trip up a back staircase to a grand mezzanine that overlooked part of the production and warehouse; there were boxes with finished drumsets ready for market, raw materials, hardware, pedals, and accessories as far as the eye could see. This loft is where John personally Timbre Matches every DW custom set. Around us were literally hundreds of shells which John will eventually tap, listen and pair with the right matches, making the ultimate drum kit that is uniform in sound, color and pitch. Something he's been doing since the inception of DW, he still does 95% of it himself, all while their business is, shall we say, a bit larger since they began. At this lofty height we could also see Shipping and Receiving. A new conveyor system had recently been installed to facilitate a faster, more accurate shipping procedure. Needless to say, this is no longer a garage operation, as it once was throughout the 1970s.

Something many drummers may not know is that DW actually makes hardware and pedals in California, a rarity these days. We saw 9000 pedals and remote hi-hats being machined and assembled right on the premises. Workers wearing blue shop aprons, armed with Allen wrenches and other hand tools skillfully assembled an array of pedals, hi-hats and stands. A fully outfitted machine shop was just beyond the hardware assembly area, tapping holes, grinding parts and making working prototypes for future DW products. In addition to testing prototypes, DW also regularly and randomly tests production hi-hats and pedals in a soundproofed testing booth. Here, pedals are robotically played for thousands of cycles to assess durability and performance. DW is famous for its custom drum shop, but the machine shop is equally as impressive.

The last stop on our factory tour was John's Gallery. Occasionally, John will discover a rare exotic wood that can only make a limited run of drumsets. These one-of-a-kind drumsets are featured on DW's site (www.dwdrums.com), where dealers and drummers can feast their eyes on John's latest creation. For this tour, DW transformed their showroom into a less virtual gallery, highlighting a selection of John's most recent works of art. The kits looked and sounded beautiful as the dealers were able to test drive these magnificent sets. It was a perfect way to cap off the factory tour, from veneer to finished set, we were able to see every facet of this labor-intensive process and the attention to detail that is required to produce each and every instrument.

As we left the gallery and wandered outside, we were surprised with something truly unique, a performance by a motorcycle-meets-jazz band group called Side-Car Jazz. Believe it or not, this is a group of motorcycle riders with instruments mounted on their side-cars! As they drove up, they parked and began swingin', complete with their DW Jazz Series drums. Along with the dealers, other fascinated and smiling fans included Terry Bozzio, JR Robinson and Curt Bisquera. We then broke for lunch, where we were treated to Jazz singer Daniela Spagnolo's quartet, featuring DW's Kendall Kay on drums. Alex Acuna, also in attendance that day, sat in, giving the dealers yet another rare treat.

After lunch, the dealers got the chance to voice their views on Sales and Marketing in an informal round table discussion. Leading the discussion were VP of Sales, Jim DeStefano, Marketing Director, Scott Donnell and DW President and CEO, Chris Lombardi and in attendance were both veteran dealers and new faces, all having the same chance to take the floor. The meeting led off

with a video presentation of DW's latest marketing efforts, including their very progressive social media marketing campaign. What was most impressive was the openness to new ideas, the exchange between dealer and manufacturer and how each party could help each other navigate through these challenging economic times. The overall discussion was less about specific DW products and price points and more about voicing opinions and prospective on the industry. This was a chance for both parties to learn from each other, to create ideas together and dialogue about the best practices; another reason why this event was so successful.

Wrapping up the day, all had the opportunity enjoy to a world-class band, Native Son. Native Son is John Robinson's band, which he shares with legendary musicians Greg Mathieson on keyboards, Neil Stubenhaus on bass and Michael Thompson on guitar. Collectively, these four artists have played on more records than practically anyone else in the business and DW's visiting guests were treated to an intimate performance all to their own.

Post dinner and concert, the smiles spoke volumes. Both the visiting dealers and DW staff felt they had renewed a connection. After all, both parties have the same goal, to bring music to their communities and run a profitable business. In a world of increasing high-tech interaction and less face-to-face time, we all forget how important it is to see the people who make the instruments, smell the wood, and confirm a deal with a firm handshake. The 2010 DW Dealer Factory Tour was both inspiring and entertaining, and every dealer I spoke with agreed:

Jesse Shapiro – "Cosmo Music" - Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada

"To use a few words, this event was class, passion and perfection. DW is just a phenomenal instrument, not just a product. They're made with love and such a quality that I've not seen in an American company. They've truly raised the bar in the eye of imports."

Gary Forkum – "Fork's Drum Closet" – Nashville, Tennessee

"I thought it was very well done. We were able to see the product in fine detail, witness how they're made in their factory tour and actually make a shell ourselves. The round table discussions between manufacturer and dealer were invaluable. Not to mention the live entertainment they provided – incredible!"

Jim Pettitt – "Memphis Drum Shop" – Memphis, Tennessee

"I told my team back home that I expected to be impressed with my DW visit, but this event way exceeded my expectations. The factory tour, their wood selection, the manufacturing process and the team behind it all...I was extremely impressed with the entire event. And their new Performance Series – very impressive and an exciting addition to their lines."

Don Frank – "Gelb Music" – Redwood City, California

"I really enjoyed this event. Every time I get the chance to visit DW, I can sense the love and passion they all have for what they do there. There's a reason why they're innovators and not imitators...they're always pushing the envelope. With the hands-on experience making my own shell on their factory tour, I now feel more connected to my own instrument and have a deeper respect of how difficult that craft really is."

Clay Reed – "Rainbow Guitars" – Tucson, Arizona

"I was lucky enough to be part of this years DW Dealer Factory tour and I thought it would be just another factory tour. Well, was I wrong! I have had a great relationship with DW for many years but I did not know how well they had retained the 'family feel'. John Good is an inspiration. He made sure to get plenty of face time with everyone there. It was a wonderful experience that I will never forget. Thanks to all the hardworking staff at DW for putting an unforgettable tour together."

Mike Snyder – "Skip's Music" – Sacramento, California

"It was truly a pleasure to participate in the 2010 DW Factory Tour last month. To have had the opportunity to personally spend some time with the talented and dedicated people that make up the DW family, it is now clearer to me than ever why Drum Workshop continues to hold its prestigious reputation. It was very exciting to be there for the unveiling of the new "Performance" line. Once again, DW has successfully developed a custom product that is designed to meet a specific customer and market demand. I'm confident that this new line will be a great success."

Rich Mangicaro resides in Los Angeles and is a freelance writer, musician, producer and educator. He has performed with Glenn Frey, Joe Walsh, Jackson Browne, Michael McDonald, The Tubes and Billy Idol, to name a few. Rich was the Director of Artist Relations/Music Education for the Paiste cymbal company for 19 years and has also worked as an ad-copy writer and music consultant for the Motion Picture industry.

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