

## JIM KELTNER – THE SIGNATURE SESSION MASTER

When it comes to the art of drumming in it's truest form, few drummers have accomplished what Jim Keltner has. It's really quite astonishing. It's not only the amount of amazing records he's played on or even the legendary artists he's collaborated with...and believe me, there are many. It's the fact that Jim has paved the way for most of the drummers you hear today to be *themselves*...to be individuals. **Jim Keltner** is arguably one of the most original drummers in recording history. When you listen to him on any of his great tracks – John Lennon, George Harrison, Eric Clapton, Roy Orbison, Bob Dylan (I told you), it's not just what he played, but *how* he played it. How he crafts his parts, how he plays the song, what sounds he chooses...all these things make him a true innovator. Paiste has worked with this incredible artist for the past 27 years and although words cannot completely express what an honor that is, we remain humbly thankful. We recently spoke with Jim about his experience playing the Signature sound family, in the session world from which he reigns.

**Rich Mangicaro:** Jim, back when you first started experimenting with the Signature sound family, what was your first impression?

Jim Keltner: Back then, the Sound Creation series were what I was used to...that darker, complex sound and the Signatures were the complete opposite of that. They were so much brighter than what I was using. That was interesting to me because I play to the sound I'm hearing and I'll play differently, depending on the sound I'm hearing from my drums and cymbals. The Signatures brightened up my sound big time. I did a bunch of records with them, however when the Traditionals were introduced, they freaked me out. They were so completely different than anything Paiste had ever made and they put me into my *Jazz* head. I remember that it was the first time in a long time, that I thought more about ride cymbals. Most of my work focuses on crashes & hi-hats, so when the Traditionals came out, I found myself going more to the ride. What I also loved was that even though they still possessed that Paiste consistency, there were subtle differences between each one, which can be very important when recording. What I love about the rides is that they all have a great crash, with what I describe as a good, *cough-like* sound. I love that and they also work very well with rivets. Then, when the Dark Energys came out, they were once again different...they took your ear to another place. I would find myself going back and forth between the Traditional and Dark Energy rides. I especially love the Dark Energy hi-hats and I was using a combination of 16" Dark Energy and Traditional crashes as my primary hats, for a while. More recently, I'm using 15" Twenty Series Hi-Hats, which were made a bit thinner for me.

**RM:** When you began using the Traditionals, is there a session from that time, which you can comment on...maybe some impressions when you first heard playbacks?

JK: I wish I could, but there's been so many that I used them on. I'm sure I have it written down somewhere, but what I do remember is how I protected my first 16" Traditionals Thin Crash. I was so worried that I would crack it and it was the most beautiful crash I'd ever heard. I'm sure you remember I wanted you to get me a couple more, exactly the same! Those cymbals are on a lot of records I did around that time.

**RM:** Jim, you're well known for thinking outside the box...for offering a completely different approach to a recording...most times, completely different from what might be expected or thought of as typical. How does this apply to your sound?

JK: I went through a dark faze, wanting darker sounding cymbals, when pretty much everyone else was using brighter cymbals and now, it's kind of gone full circle where most drummers are looking for dark sounds and I'm the opposite. It's sort of a semi-conscious thing on my part, I guess. To my ears, what may seem normal or accepted is almost like a signal to try something else, but then I know a lot of drummers who are like that.

**RM:** I'm sure a big part of what you decide to put up, depends on the song and what the music dictates. Talk a bit about that.

JK: That's exactly what I go by. And, it can be what *I* want for the song. Because of my track record, I'm trusted now for my input and I feel fortunate to have that leeway. The producers I work with know me and have given me this freedom, which of course enables me to try things and to experiment...not only just with music choices but also sound choices. I've always gotten great feedback about my cymbals.

**RM:** What would you say is the most important thing, after all these years with Paiste, which has helped you with your work in the studio?

JK: What has made this relationship so special to me is the collaboration between us. Whenever I've had an idea or a desire for a sound, Paiste has ALWAYS been there. Their sound development procedure, how they interact with the artist and how these collaborations ultimately produce such great instruments is what's so exciting to me. They made so many things for me over the years and I know that some of our brainstorming sessions have produced some cymbals for the market. I'm proud of this and have loved this part of being a Paiste artist. I'm truly honored to have this interaction with them. Robert and Erik Paiste, Fredy Studer and Toomas early on - and everyone at Paiste really loves what they do, and it shows. I can't wait to see what they'll come up with next!