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Gretsch News, Vol. 4

Gretsch Company

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Steve Ferrone on Gretsch, Petty Wildflowers, and Cadillac Green

Interview By: Brad Ranola

About to leave for Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers’ 30th anniversary tour, drumming great, Stephen Ferrone sat down with us to talk about his playing and his return to the Gretsch Family.

Steve, you’re originally from Brighton (England), you studied at the Nice Conservatory... What got you working in the rock scene so heavily?

Well it’s funny; I was just talking to Tom (Petty) the other night, ‘cause we’re both the same age, about all the songs that he knows from when he first started playing; I was playing all the same songs. A lot of Chuck Berry stuff, a lot of Beatles stuff, a lot of blues stuff, you know. The Yardbirds, The Animals, and all those bands from that era, we grew up listening to all these English Bands.

At the conservatory, you were mainly classically trained, right?

Right, but I had already been playing for years by then. I was playing with R&B bands. Then, I was playing with this French band that was a cross between nouveau Jazz and Chicago. These guys all pretty much knew what they were doin’ so I had to sort of learn to do stuff.

I notice you’re still one of the few that play traditional grip. How do you feel about the grip and its use or lack of use today?

You hold a stick however you feel comfortable. I used to play match grip, but there was stuff I felt I couldn’t get at with that grip so I changed. I saw this other way of playing, but the hardest thing of the lot was figuring out how to keep the power in the backbeat. So, I sort of power down with the thumb. I’ve got a pretty ugly thumb! If you ever get a chance to look at my left thumb, I’ve got this sort of hard callous thing on it [laughs]. I won’t be doing any sort of hand ads for Downy or Pond’s Cream anyway.

You’ve played with everyone from The Average White Band, to Eric Clapton, and Chaka Khan, to George Benson. When you first jump into a gig that’s so vastly different from the last gig you played, how do you approach “changing gears”?

Well, I just kind of look at the song really. I look at the song and see what the song calls for and I just kind of deliver that, you know? I’ve listened to a lot of different music and a lot of different styles, and I’ve learned a lot listening to a lot of great drummers. And some of the guys I listen to don’t really have a lot to do with what I do, but I’ve some how managed to incorporate their spirit. I don’t like to do a lot of what I call “precious drumming,” or playing little things here and there - you know, the showy stuff. I’m kind of a meat and potatoes guy so that’s how I play.

You can hear that. Your pocket is just so defined and the feel is always spot-on.

Well even when it comes to be-bop - I love listening to Jack DeJohnette. I love what he plays. I love his melodic approach, just amazing. But, for the jazz scene the meat and potatoes guy was Art Blakey. He’d play like nothing, but he just swung like crazy! I mean he could drive a big band with just a hi-hat and a ride cymbal. I’ve listened to records of Art Blakey when in between the solos, he didn’t even play a fill! He just kept going. He was just great! So I try to do that with most of the songs I play. I get into the genre of music and do my stuff with it.

How does playing Gretsch help you out with the versatility of your gigs?

Gretsch drums are just so easy to get a tone out of. You don’t have to work too hard. I am great believer that a drum is going to sound how you want it to sound. So you start off with a drum and you say, “I want this thing to sound this way.” You usually have to do a little bit of work to get it to do that. Whereas Gretsch shells just have this great quality to start off with, it makes life a lot easier - they’re a very musical instrument.

What’s your new configuration like?

Well with Tom, I usually just go with a 12” rack tom, a 14” floor and a 16” floor and I’m using a 24 x 14 Bass drum, all maple. I’ve got a maple 14 x 5.5 for the snare that’s really cool.

Have you always played maple kits?

Actually, I was walking around the NAMM show a few years ago and I tapped on the Walnut kit and was like “WOW! What is that? That thing sounds fantastic.” And that was the kit that actually brought me back to Gretsch. So, I immediately called up Dinah. I’ve always had a great relationship with Dinah and Fred Gretsch. And told them “I really wanna play that kit.”

When I think Steve Ferrone, I see you behind a sunburst kit, why Cadillac green this time?

Yeah I actually stole that from Max [Roach]. Dinah gave me a copy of this old sort of History of Gretsch book, and I was looking through it and there was a Cadillac Green drum kit with Max Roach that’s just beautiful. I thought, “I’d really like to have one of those.” So, they actually made it out of the original paint formula.

You started playing with Tom Petty in 1992 and you’re now doing Tom
Petty's 30th Anniversary tour that's just amazing. What's the most exciting aspect of this gig for you? Well, we're doin' a couple of new songs. We're doing a Fleetwood Mac song called "Oh well." And Stevie Nicks is gonna come out and sing some songs with us. She just sounds fantastic!

What gig would you say was the most challenging for you, musically or otherwise? Oh Geeze, I think playing Quincy Jones's Big Band Charts was the most challenging musically. I played at Montreaux with him for his 65th birthday. I don't really get to play a lot of big band stuff and it's kind of like my eyes, as far as reading that sort of stuff, are kind of out of practice. I didn't learn to read music until I was 21 so if I don't read a lot, my eyes get slow. And I don't have anything to read with Tom! [laughs]

I consider you one of the iconic players for my students and young people to familiarize themselves with. Given how vast your discography is, if there was one album that you're on that could sum up "Steve," stylistically, musically, "spiritually," what would it be? Oh to narrow it down to one album is so difficult. I've been really blessed with all of the music I've got to play on. If you look at Tom Petty's *Wildflowers*, what an album. If you look at Pat Metheny's *Secret Story*, I mean, what a privilege to play on that. That's one of the most beautiful albums I've ever been involved with. If you look at *Unplugged* by Eric Clapton, incredible! We did that in 3 days and the band, though we didn't get much credit for it [laughs], we did all the arrangements. The Average White Band, *Soul Searching*, classic Album. Chaka Khan, *Naughty*, we did that in Switzerland with Arif (Mardin, producer). I mean if you wanted to put all of those together, then I guess you could say, "That was it." And I've done my little album, which just sort of escaped. I just put it out on CDBaby.com and every now and then someone will find it, and I get these emails, "Wow man, great album," "great playing." Well you know it took me 3 years to finish it. Well, It took me a year to listen to it and then when I listened to it I was like "Wow, man!" I mean these guys are just playing great! I've got to finish it. It'd be such a waste to have this recorded and not have someone hear it. Gerald Albright, David Garfield, Jimmy Earl, I mean they're just playing their butts off. I've just finished another one. Some of the guys from Stone Temple Pilots are playing on it, the DeLeo brothers. It should be out soon.

What are some of the best things you like about your new Gretsch and Gibraltar setup? I'm really diggin' the stands. Just the way the combination goes together. It's funny, being a creature of habit, it's kinda hard when you suddenly switch over to different pedals or anything, but I just love the way these are easy and things are kept simple. There's not too much twiddlin' around with stuff to get things to go where you want it to go. It's easy to situate the stuff and easy to set up. I also really like the lighter stands for when I go and do a club gig and I have to carry my own stuff [laughs].

Stephen and I later got into a long discussion about vintage gear, bantering about who found what, where. We talked about how the sounds of various pieces have so much voice and personality. He then had this to say about playing with Tom Petty:

Tom and the Heartbreakers are all about sound and the way an instrument sounds is really important to them. They've all got vintage amps and really expensive old guitars, and they take them out on the road 'cause it has to sound right. Everything is really well taken care of and well-maintained cause it's gotta have THAT SOUND. So when you show up with something new when Tom's used to a certain thing because it sounds good, he's always sort of like, "You want to change that? 'Cause I like it." Well as soon as he walked in the building, Tom says, "Man, the drums sound great! I like it!" So he's very happy. I gotta say it's nice when you can pull out a brand new kit that sounds like my Gretsch's sound.
G-4160SA Solid Aluminum specifications:
• 5 x 14 Solid Aluminum Machined shell
• Shell thickness: 5mm edges, 3mm wall
• Clear lacquer finish
• Gretsch knurl around center of shell
• Lightning throw-off and butt plate
• Snap-in drum key holder
• Gretsch 42-strand snares
• 8-lugs design

The G-4160SA Solid Aluminum snare drum features a 5 x 14 solid aluminum machined shell with a 3mm wall and 5mm edges. This shell has the distinctive Gretsch knurl around the center of the shell with a clear lacquer finish, eight double-sided lugs, die-cast hoops and Gretsch’s Lightning throw-off, 42-strand snares, snap-in drum key holder and “Stop Sign” badge. This drum produces a very warm sound with excellent articulation and projection.

G-4160SS Solid Steel specifications:
• 5 x 14 Solid steel machined shell
• Shell thickness: 5mm edges, 3mm wall
• Black chrome finish
• Gretsch knurl around center of shell
• Lightning throw-off and butt plate
• Snap-in drum key holder
• Gretsch 42-strand snares
• 8-lug design

The heaviest Gretsch snare drum ever! The G-4160SS Solid steel snare drum is made to cut with authority in any musical setting. Measuring 5 x 14, this drum is precision constructed out of heavy machined steel and has a 3mm wall and 5mm edges. Finishing touches include the classic Gretsch centered ornamental knurled band, sleek black chrome finish, integrated drum key holder and “Stop Sign” badge. With eight double-sided lugs, die-cast hoops, Lightning throw-off and Gretsch's 42-strand snares, this drum is capable of delivering sharp percussive shots that will blast through heavy sonic density.
African Mahogany

RP-E826-MH Shell Pack configuration:
- 18\" x 22\" Bass (no tom mount)
- 8\" x 10\" Tom with GTS
- 9\" x 12\" Tom with GTS
- 14\" x 14\" Floor Tom with legs
- 16\" x 16\" Floor Tom with legs
- 5.5\" x 14\" 10-lug Snare Drum

African Mahogany has all the characteristics of a great tone wood. Its weight and strength produce a well-balanced tone range and strong volume. African Mahogany produces approximately a 20\% increase to low frequency resonance to a comparable maple shell. Mid and high frequencies are similar to Maple but due to the increased lower frequency response, the Gretsch Renown Purewood Mahogany is perceived to have an overall warmer tonal characteristic.
**Renown Purewood Mahogany specifications:**
Renown Purewood sets feature 6-ply 100% African Mahogany shells with a stunning clear gloss finish. A limited number of sets will be produced in two configurations. Due to the exclusive nature of these sets, no add-on drums will be available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Shell</strong></th>
<th>6-ply African Mahogany shells with silver sealer interior finish in clear gloss UV finish.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bearing Edges</strong></td>
<td>All drums have 30-degree bearing edges with slight rounded outside edge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hardware</strong></td>
<td>New Millennium triple chrome-plated lugs, telescoping spurs, and mounts. All mounted toms come standard with GTS Suspension systems. All floor toms include brackets and legs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bass Hoops</strong></td>
<td>All-Mahogany matching bass drum hoops in clear gloss finish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tom Hoops</strong></td>
<td>All mounted toms and floor toms use New Millennium triple chrome die-cast hoops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heads</strong></td>
<td>Bass drums – Evans E-Mad batter head and Ebony logo head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tom Toms – Evans G2 clear, clear resonant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Snares – Evans G1 coated batter, clear snare side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finish</strong></td>
<td>Clear UV gloss over Mahogany wood grain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RP-R644-MH Shell Pack configuration:**
- 16" x 24" Bass (no tom mount)
- 9" x 13" Tom with GTS
- 16" x 16" Floor Tom with legs
- 6.5" x 14" 10-lug Snare Drum
**Catalina Maple Series**

**Model**
MC-E825PT 18 x 22 Bass, 8 x 10, 9 x 12 Toms, 14 x 14 Floor Tom, 6 x 14 Snare. FREE 16 x 16 Floor Tom with legs. All necessary tom holders are included.

**Shells**
6-ply Maple tom shells, 7-ply Maple bass drum shell, 9-ply Maple snare shell with natural interior finish in UV gloss finishes.

**Bearing Edges**
All drums have 45-degree bearing edges with slight rounded outside edges.

**Hardware**
New Millennium triple chrome-plated lugs, telescopic spurs, and mounts. All mounted toms come standard with GTS Suspension systems. All floor toms include brackets and legs.

**Bass Hoops**
Maple bass drum hoops in matching gloss finishes.

**Tom Hoops**
All mounted toms and floor toms use triple chrome-plated 2.5mm flanged hoops.

**Heads**
Bass drums – clear pre-muffled batter head, Ebony logo head
Tom Toms – Clear batter, clear resonant
Snares – Coated batter, clear snare side

**Finishes**
Catalina Maple drums are offered in Cherry Red (MR) and Deep Amber (MA) gloss UV finishes.

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**Catalina Ash Series**

**Model**
AC-E825PT 18 x 22 Bass, 8 x 10, 9 x 12 Toms, 14 x 14 Floor Tom, 5 x 14 Snare. FREE 7 x 8 Tom with multi-clamp and tom arm. All necessary tom holders are included.

**Shells**
6-ply Ash tom shells, 7-ply Ash bass drum shell, 9-ply Ash snare shell with natural interior finish in UV gloss finishes.

**Bearing Edges**
All drums have 45-degree bearing edges with slight rounded outside edges.

**Hardware**
New Millennium triple chrome-plated lugs, telescopic spurs, and mounts. All mounted toms come standard with GTS Suspension systems. All floor toms include brackets and legs.

**Bass Hoops**
Ash bass drum hoops in matching gloss finishes.

**Tom Hoops**
All mounted toms and floor toms use triple chrome-plated 2.5mm flanged hoops.

**Heads**
Bass drums – clear pre-muffled batter head, Ebony logo head
Tom Toms – Clear batter, clear resonant
Snares – Coated batter, clear snare side

**Finishes**
Catalina Ash drums are offered in Deep Red (AR) and Cobalt Blue (AC) gloss UV finishes.
Gretsch Custom Drums
By Brad Schlueter

I recently spent sometime checking out one of Gretsch's top-of-the-line USA Custom Drum kits. Like countless Jazz, Rock and Country drummers before me, I was very impressed by the drums I was sent. The Gretsch family has been making drums in this country for over a hundred and twenty years, so with all their experience, I shouldn't be surprised.

The kit I played included a 9 x 12-inch mounted tom, 12 x 14-inch and 14 x 16-inch floor toms, and an 18 x 22-inch bass drum all finished in Gretsch's Dark Walnut Gloss Lacquer. Cosmetically, the drums were flawless. From their beautifully chromed die-cast hoops, lugs and shell hardware, to the rich Dark Walnut lacquer finish, these gorgeous drums have a premium, high-class appearance. Upon close examination, the grain of the Maple peeks through the deeply colored finish. No detail has been overlooked. Even the badges have a subtle sunburst in their gold and brown finish, which perfectly complements the drums' earthy hues.

The mounted tom features the GTS suspension system, which promotes sustain by hanging the drum rather than attaching extra resonance-robbing hardware to the shell. It has a slightly
Retro look that I like. The look of these lugs is appealing too. The bass drum features telescoping spurs that give you the choice of a rubber tip or metal spike to stop “bass drum creep” and insure the drum’s adhesion to any surface regardless of how hard you play. I had no problem with the bass drum moving even under my very heavy foot.

Gretsch drums are prized for their great sound. Pinning down exactly what creates that elusive commodity is certainly no easy task. Maple shells are known for their balanced and even frequency projection. All Gretsch’s premium drums feature the same 6-ply Maple shell design with 30-degree bearing edges that they’ve used for over 40 years. While many drum companies today use Maple shells for their high-end kits, most other companies employ a sharper 45-degree bearing edge that produces a bright tone.

Gretsch’s 30-degree bearing edges are rounder and have more contact area between the head and shell, which transmits more vibration, increasing the shell’s resonance, while producing a deeper, warmer tone. Unlike some other American-made drums, none of these have or need reinforcing rings, which add mass to a shell, change its pitch, and distort under heavy playing. The shell interiors are finished with their distinctive Silver Sealer to protect the drum from changes in humidity. Their toms have long featured more expensive and stronger die-cast hoops over cheaper, stamped steel hoops because they increase a drum’s attack, midrange punch, and help focus its frequency response.

None of this would really matter if the drums didn’t sound great. Fortunately, they do. Deep, warm with plenty of attack when tuned low. The sizes on this set worked wonderfully for Rock gigs. At the gigs I used them on, they worked perfectly, eliciting complements on both their appearance and sound. Tuned higher, these drums could project quite well behind a big band.

While the drum market is saturated with cheap drums manufactured overseas, it’s nice to know there are top quality drums still being made by Gretsch in the United States. The combination of excellent workmanship, rounder bearing edge design and Gretsch’s unique Maple shells all contribute significantly to “That Great Gretsch Sound.” I’m not at all surprised that 40, 50 and 60-year old Gretsch kits are still prized by the most discriminating collectors. This is a thoroughly first-class drum set.
Gretsch Artists in the News

Stanton Moore, a long-time fan of Gretsch drums, finally found a free day in his schedule to visit the Gretsch factory in Ridgeland, SC. Stanton received a VIP tour of the factory courtesy of Operations Manager, Paul Cooper and Gretsch Artist Relations Manager, Kim Graham. From sanding to drilling to painting, Stanton examined all the steps involved in creating Gretsch Custom drums and shook hands with the masters behind the drum building magic. Whether he's touring with his own trio or with Galactic, Stanton keeps his Gretsch drums busy with his ever-slinky grooves.

Steve Ferrone Visits Gretsch Factory
Receives First Gretsch Kit

On a recent visit to the historic Gretsch drum factory in Ridgeland, SC, Steve Ferrone received a special surprise... delivery of his first Gretsch kit!

Ferrone's USA Custom kit included a 14 x 24 bass drum, 8 x 12 tom, 14 x 16 floor tom and 16 x 16 floor tom in Cadillac Green finish. Listen to Steve's factory fresh Gretsch Drums on tour this summer with music legends Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers.

We'd also like to congratulate Vinnie Colaiuta for "Drummer of the Year" and "Studio Drummer" for this year's DRUM! Magazine Drummie Awards.

Gretsch welcomes the following endorsers to the family:

- Steve Ferrone (Tom Petty)
- George Riceli (Bob Dylan)
- Rick Woolstenhulme, Jr. (Lifehouse)
- Daniel Davison (Norma Jean)
- Justin Graves (A Life Once Lost)
- Sam Bey (What About Frank)
- Doug Frasure (Lane Turner)
- Seith Rausch (Gary Allan)
- José Medeles (The Breeders)

Stanton Moore, a long-time fan of Gretsch drums, finally found a free day in his schedule to visit the Gretsch factory in Ridgeland, SC. Stanton received a VIP tour of the factory courtesy of Operations Manager, Paul Cooper and Gretsch Artist Relations Manager, Kim Graham. From sanding to drilling to painting, Stanton examined all the steps involved in creating Gretsch Custom drums and shook hands with the masters behind the drum building magic. Whether he's touring with his own trio or with Galactic, Stanton keeps his Gretsch drums busy with his ever-slinky grooves.

Steve Ferrone kicks back with his Gretsch USA Custom kit in downtown Savannah, GA. (Photo credit for Steve Ferrone photo: Deborah Arlook)
### Catalina Club Mod

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>CC-M024 20 x 22 Bass drum, 8 x 12 Tom, 14 x 16 Floor Tom, 6 1/2 x 14 Snare drum. All necessary tom holders are included.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shells</td>
<td>9-ply Mahogany shells with natural interior finish in retro Nitron covered finishes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bearing Edges</td>
<td>All drums have 30-degree bearing edges with slight rounded outside edges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware</td>
<td>New Millennium lugs, telescopic spurs, and mounts in black finish. All mounted toms come with mini GTS Suspension systems. All floor toms include brackets and legs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Hoops</td>
<td>Maple bass drum hoops with matching Nitron inlay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Hoops</td>
<td>All mounted toms and floor toms use 1.6mm flanged hoops in black finish.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Heads | Bass drums – Pre-muffled batter head, Ebony logo head  
Tom Toms – Evans G1 coated batter, white resonant  
Snares – Evans G1 coated batter, clear snare side |
| Finishes | Catalina Mod kits are offered in new Black Stripe (BS) and Alien Blue (AB) Nitron finishes. |

### Catalina Club Rock

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>CC-R665 16 x 26 Bass drum, 9 x 13 Tom, 16 x 16 and 16 x 18 Floor Toms, 6 1/2 x 14 snare drum.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bearing Edges</td>
<td>All drums have 30-degree bearing edges with slight rounded outside edges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware</td>
<td>New Millennium triple chrome-plated lugs, telescopic spurs, and mounts. All mounted toms come standard with GTS Suspension systems. All floor toms include brackets and legs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Hoops</td>
<td>Maple bass drum hoops with matching Nitron inlay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Hoops</td>
<td>All mounted toms and floor toms use triple chrome-plated 1.6mm flanged hoops.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Heads | Bass drums – Pre-muffled batter head, Ebony logo head  
Tom Toms – Evans G1 coated batter, white resonant  
Snares – Evans G1 coated batter, clear snare side |
| Finishes | Catalina Rock kits are offered in Black Flake UV gloss (BF) and classic Silver Sparkle (SS) Nitron finishes. |
A Sound Like No Other...

In 1883 in a small shop in Brooklyn, New York, Friederich Gretsch began creating the sound that today’s drummers call “That Great Gretsch Sound.” Now 123 years later the same care and commitment to quality for which the Gretsch family is famous for continues to produce drums with superior craftsmanship, innovation, and of course...

That Great Gretsch Sound