



## REVIEW

AHEAD signature sticks



# AHEAD Signature Sticks

**AHEAD offers synthetic alternatives to wood from its signature range**

**T**he natural wood drumstick has been a tad slow to evolve, although the art of manufacturing them for straightness, weight and durability has seen significant developments over the years. However, it was really only the introduction of nylon tipped sticks back in 1958 by Joe Calato that drummers began to realise that maybe there were alternatives.

Fast forward some 40 years and AHEAD appeared on the scene with a revolutionary stick manufactured with an aluminum shaft and rubberised sleeve that offered unprecedented durability. Would drummers drop the traditional wood stick and embrace AHEAD's technology? Well, on the evidence, the jury is still out. But some drummers have warmed to the synthetic stick, including Lars Ulrich, Tommy Lee, Travis Smith and Joey Jordison. Okay, you may say, 'These are all heavy metal players, so it makes sense for them to have synthetic sticks'. True, but Jim Keltner is hardly a heavy metal player and he uses these same sticks, as do many others. So it was with intrigue that I began to look into the synthetic stick.

### Build/Construction

For review we have four signature models, - Lars Ulrich, Tommy Lee, Travis Smith and Joey Jordison. The newest of which is Trivium's Travis Smith stick that has just been introduced.

AHEAD claims that these synthetic sticks result in less hand fatigue and joint damage as the

words: Ian Croft images: Eckie

stick generates 50% less shock and vibration than that which wood sticks dish out. The company also claim that the technology that they use results in a consistency that wood cannot rival and then of course, there is the durability issue that AHEAD says results in their sticks lasting between six and ten times longer.

It seems that each stick begins life as an aluminum shaft that is then covered with an interchangeable outer sleeve that butts firmly up against the spacer ring at the grip end of the stick. A threaded nylon tip is then screwed onto the end of the stick to complete the look. Replacement sleeves are available, as are tips and spacer rings, thereby prolonging the lifespan of the sticks that come with a 60-day warranty.

### Size Matters

The shorter/smallest of the sticks is the Joey Jordison/Slipknot model. According to the AHEAD stick chart, this stick is similar to the 7A model that the company offers with an overall diameter of .540" and length of 15.688". The 'wall', which is the thickness of the aluminum rod, is .030", with a medium taper shaft, making this stick one that would appeal to a broad range of players, not to mention the many legions of Joey fans out there. The Joey stick is really nice to play with and when compared to an equivalent wood stick, you realise how well balanced the sticks are and you do notice

that there is a little more weight to the front end of the stick that assists nicely with rebound.

Next is the Travis Smith model, the newest of this quartet to be released and again cements the attitude that these sticks appeal to the heavier hitters. The Travis stick 'ups the ante' with a diameter of .595" and length of 16", with what appears to be a standard 'wall' of .035". The Travis stick benefits from a short taper that begins nearer the front end of the stick than the Jordison model and results in a little more power being delivered to the drumhead.

The Lars Ulrich signature stick is almost identical to the Travis Smith stick except that this stick has an overall length of 16.25" and features a long taper. Interestingly, when comparing the Lars stick with the Travis stick, the additional quarter inch made a huge difference to the overall balance and rebound of the stick and I had to work harder to get the same response. Nonetheless, the Lars stick did seem to draw a slightly bigger impact from the drumhead.

The Tommy Lee 'Concert' signature series stick features a silver sleeve instead of the regulation black sleeve that the other models possess. Hey, he's Tommy and he can be different! This stick is also the longest by some margin, running out at 17" in length, with a short taper. With a stick this length, your backbeats become huge, as do your tom fills, although, at no time did the sticks feel ungainly or awkward. **[I]**

## Heads Up

### PRICE:

AHEAD signature sticks £28.99

### UPBEATS

- ▲ Longevity
- ▲ Consistent balance

### DOWNBEATS

- ▼ You'll re-examine your attitude to synthetic sticks

### CONTACT:

B. R. Distribution  
Tel: 01207 282 806  
www.brdistribution.co.uk  
www.bigbangdistribution.com

## Conclusion

Initially, I recoiled at the prospect of playing with these synthetic sticks, but in the interest of fair-minded reviews, I had to get on with reviewing them. After trying all the models, I have to admit that my initial 'luddite' attitude was wrong as the sticks soon became very friendly in my hands and in particular, the Joey Jordison stick. Now, I'm hastily changing my original attitude and I would certainly carry a pair of these sticks in my bag even if I only occasionally used them. They excel for side-stick work as the grip/butt end does draw a healthy 'crack' out of the hoop, adding a high level of clarity to the stroke.

From a financial point of view too, these sticks represent good value. They might well cost you close on £30, but if they do last up to six or more times longer than a pair of wood sticks, they also make sound financial sense. Don't be as 'blinkered' as I initially was and do check the sticks out as you may just be surprised at how good they feel in your hands.