

TIMPANI HEAD REPLACEMENT & MAINTENANCE

Jeffrey H. Vick

529 South Black Avenue

Bozeman, MT 59715

(406) 570-5154

I: REMOVING THE OLD HEAD

- Mark the counterhoop above the pedal so it may be replaced later in the same position
- Hold the heel of the pedal down (spring mechanisms) or lock pedal halfway (clutch mechanisms)
- Gradually remove all tension rods in a criss-cross manner as to not warp the counterhoop
- When rods are all loose, gently release the pedal (spring) so it does not slam down
- Remove counterhoop and head

II: MAINTENANCE WORK

- Clean everything (inside of drum bowl, frame)
- Remove dents from bowl if necessary (use a rubber hammer, NOT metal)
- Tighten all bolts, replacing any that are missing
- Lubricate all moving parts
 - o spider mechanism & pedal with WD-40
 - o tension rods with Axle grease or Vaseline (thicker – won't run)
- Clean the bearing edge thoroughly and use either a Teflon tape or spray ("Dry-Lube") to prevent squeaks & creaks when changing pitches.
 - o OK but less satisfactory is cork grease (if you wipe off most of it)
 - o NEVER use a thick greasy substance like Vaseline, or sticky like wax

III: INSTALLING NEW HEAD

- Place the new head and counterhoop on the drum
- Finger tighten the tension rods until they barely touch the counterhoop
- If drums have an "extended" collar, use a ruler or tape measure to check the distance between the counterhoop and the bearing edge on the drum – be sure it is the same all the way around the drum as close as possible
- Hold the heel of the pedal down (spring mechanisms) and tighten the tension rods in a criss-cross manner until the head is in range
- Measure the vertical distance from the bearing edge to the counterhoop at each tension rod. TAP Products makes a simple "Head Gauge" or homemade OK
 - o Adjust as needed, then check to see if pitch is still in playing range.
 - o Adjust all tension rods equally if needed to restore playing range pitches.

IV: FINE TUNING THE HEAD

- A DrumDial probably is the easiest and most accurate way to fine tune a head
 - o Take readings 1/2" from bearing edge at each tension rod and find an average number reading
 - o Raise the lower numbers to match the average reading
 - o Lower the higher numbers
 - o Recheck all points again – this "balancing act" process continues until all numbers are the same. Each adjustment you make changes all of the other points on the counterhoop as well. Be patient!
 - o Recheck playing range and adjust all tension rods equally as needed to restore range
 - o If needed, very small adjustments (1/8 turn) can be made to match pitches at each tension rod

It takes about THREE WEEKS for the new head to seat, settle, and sound it's best. Fine tuning adjustments will need to be made as different tension rod points will go out of tune to different degrees. After about three weeks the head is very stable and few adjustments will need to be made.