

# HeadHunters Drumsticks

By Jeremiah Link

After years of innovation and creative development, HeadHunters Drumsticks President Dave Rundle realized the company's slogan fell short of encompassing the potential of their newly developed products – products that go well beyond what typically defines a drumstick. Now, HeadHunters' line of tools for drummers has appropriately split into two categories: Sticks that uphold the old slogan of "Stick with the Groove," and their unique Creations line that embodies the new tag line of "Advancing Designs for Creative Drummers."

"There's drumsticks that everybody has and then there's this other category that I'm trying to develop by adding more and more special effects and improved designs," Rundle says. "I just call them 'Creations.'"

A longtime member of the MI industry, Rundle's enthusiasm toward the products is indicative of the quality of HeadHunters' drumsticks, brushes, rods, and mallets. But it wouldn't mean much if he was the only one who thought that way. "When we went to NAMM this year, I had drummers that were hugging me and kissing my cheek, and they'd go, 'You are solving all these problems!' They can't believe it."

HeadHunters Creations are designed to elicit all kinds of different sounds out of a drumkit and cymbals, depending on what players want to achieve. Rundle explains it is possible to create unique percussive sounds, increase the dynamic range, and make playing easier by tweaking the traditional stick design. Their philosophy is all about exploring new sounds.

"My mission statement is to actually give drummers and musicians a vehicle to create new genres of music and to create new ideas that will actually change the course of music."

His ideas seemingly never run dry. He is thinking of new ways to improve his designs or pondering cool potential merchandise and promo ideas. The current challenge for HeadHunters isn't related to its products, but rather marketing and gaining traction with players. That said, Rundle feels that drawing from user feedback for product development and refinement has actually been an effective means of promotion.

"I have more and more ideas all the time that we're developing, and I think



TED & DAVE RUNDLE OF HEADHUNTERS DRUMSTICKS AT THE 2016 NAMM SHOW

if you throw them all out there and then you see who starts using what, you find out what you can do to make it better, and then you keep changing and modifying it and making it better, then eventually you nail it." In turn, the players feel involved in the process.

That ground-level marketing, which also includes the company's social media efforts, has been producing results. If people can hear and use HeadHunters' sticks and creations, Rundle says there is going to be no other option for them. By extension, he feels that if a dealer invests the time to get a customer's hands on the products and they decide to take the item out of the bag to show the customer, they won't need to look any further. That's Rundle's ideal MI retailer: one that's willing to spend time assessing a drummer's needs and direct them to the unique products that will deliver exactly what they're trying to get out of their kit.

It's an exciting time for HeadHunters. When asked about current trends that they are capitalizing on, Rundle explains that not many other companies are pushing the envelope to this degree. In fact, other companies have approached him about developing products for them, but that's not something that interests him.

"I really want to build my own brand," Rundle says. "If it completely takes off and goes completely crazy with sales, I have a problem, but it's a fun

problem to solve. It's not a fun problem to solve when you have to figure out how to make the stuff for somebody else. Then it's a job."

For the time being, his plans for HeadHunters mainly involve keeping the new ideas flowing. He had a number of new innovations to show at this year's NAMM Show and had a good reception. He's excited for more people to get their hands on new HeadHunters gear so more drummers can push the limits of their creative potential.

"You know, accoutrements, tools, innovations – whatever you want to call them; the idea is just to let drummers try things out and get creative with them." The new slogan of "Advancing Designs for Creative Drummers" encompasses what those Creations are meant to accomplish, which is to give players the means of discovering new sounds, techniques, and musical ideas.

From this day forward, he plans to use the word "creative" a lot more, not only pertaining to his products, but also for the new avenues that drummers can explore with HeadHunters in their hands.

*Jeremiah Link is a writer who likes to colourfully capture and tell stories. When he's not writing, you can catch him at the theatre watching a good movie, at the park playing some soccer, or capturing the beauty of the world through photography.*

By Shelley Barski

# Our Voice For Music Education

Increasing Awareness Across the Country

The Coalition for Music Education made huge strides this year to create more Canadian music makers with a myriad of educational programs. NAMM is proud to partner with the coalition and had a chance to catch up with Executive Director Holly Nimmons as she discussed how music is changing lives.

## NAMM: How did growing up with music education shape your life?



CME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HOLLY NIMMONS

HN: Music education helped me understand the capability of achieving success together. I participated in many school concerts and shows, all of which involved students individually working to be successful and then joining together to create successful events. This led to my dedication to community development and engagement.

At 93, my father, Phil Nimmons, is one of Canada's oldest music educators, with thousands of students and families who continue to appreciate his contributions. Through this, I've experienced the impact one person can have on many. It's given me profound respect for all music teachers, and for the immense potential of music programs.

## How can retailers become a music advocate within the Coalition?

- Supporting the Youth4Music Manifesto and Youth Ambassadors.
- Becoming advocates within the Coalition by taking leadership roles for Music Monday in their communities, and engaging families, schools, community education programs, and community music groups.
- Developing a MMC2C celebration next year during Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This is a great opportunity to show the vital role that the music industry has played and will continue to play as we strengthen music in Canada.

To explore opportunities, email [holly@musicmakesus.ca](mailto:holly@musicmakesus.ca).

## NAMM: What have you done this year to support your goal and mission?

HN: The Coalition's mission is "to raise the awareness and understanding of the role

that music education plays in Canadian culture, and to promote the benefits that music education brings to young people." Our priorities are to inform, advocate, celebrate, and connect. We've supported this mission and those priorities through a comprehensive plan that includes outreach and communication strategies, as well as program delivery.

Music Monday brings national public awareness to the power of music in our lives and is the only nationwide celebration of music that actively engages children and youth in their schools and communities. We live-streamed a National Showcase Concert with diverse performances and prominent Canadian speakers, developed a programmed webcast of videos submitted for MMC2C (Music Monday Coast 2 Coast), supported special events in cities across the country, and hundreds of thousands of music-makers celebrated in their classrooms and communities – all to promote the benefits of music education.

The new Youth4Music program is integrally involved by engaging youth in leadership roles, chronicling their Music Monday experiences, and by having them actively participate across the country. Youth4Music also celebrates youth leadership through the Nufisicium Awards – read that backwards. We held our first annual Youth4Music Leadership Symposium, and we're currently planning similar events across Canada. Youth developed the Youth4Music Manifesto for "learning, creating, making, and valuing music in Canada," which was announced during the National Showcase Concert. For more info on the manifesto, go to [www.youth4music.ca](http://www.youth4music.ca).

The Coalition's success is built on "connecting" and collaboration with leaders who share our vision, so that we can work together to achieve even more meaningful outcomes. Updated research was determined as a priority collaborative goal.

## NAMM: How do the Coalition's initiatives support industry growth?

HN: Music Monday brings attention to the importance of music education programs. It's supported by massive media and social media campaigns, which lead to greater public awareness about music making,



CELEBRATIONS FOR MUSIC MONDAY, HELD MAY 2, 2016

musical instruments, instrument repair, as well as their local music store. The music industry is always invited to participate in community initiatives to bring focus to their perspectives about music education, as well as the services they provide.

Young music industry delegates were integral to the vitality of this year's Youth4Music Leadership Symposium, with representation from Yamaha Canada Music, Long & McQuade, D'Addario Canada, Roland Canada, St. John's Music, and Music Canada.

NAMM: How does NAMM's partnership with the Coalition help support music making in Canada?

HN: Support from The NAMM Foundation helps us to deliver innovative, collaborative, engaging, and successful Music Monday programs. For example, we're able to showcase a diverse group of young music makers in events across the country, and this year initiated MMC2C. In 2014, we conducted our first Music Monday Anthem Search promoting music making in Canada, and in 2017, we will conduct a similar search for music to help celebrate Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The NAMM Foundation's support has also helped us to develop the Youth4Music program, where youth are making a difference in their schools and communities. This led to the Youth4Music Manifesto; "music making" is one of the four pivotal components of the plan, which also includes learning and creating music, and most importantly, working towards "valuing" music in Canada.