

# Quick Looks

## **Vater Vintage Bomber Bass Drum Beater**



When I was interviewing jazz great Joe La Barbera for an *MD* story a couple of years ago, the subject of playing a soft “four-on-the-floor” bass drum pattern came up. Joe confirmed that he had seen many legendary jazz drummers play quarter notes on the bass drum so softly that one could barely hear them, except when they played accents. This led to the mistaken assumption that those drummers *only* played accents.

But Joe also pointed out that the equipment was different in those days. “A lamb’s-wool beater is going to sound a lot softer and be a lot easier to control than a wooden beater,” he explained.

Shortly after that, I attempted to find a big, soft lamb’s-wool beater, but to no avail. So I was delighted when Vater introduced their Vintage Bomber beater. It’s specifically designed to recreate the soft, controllable bass drum sound from the 1920s and ‘30s.

Like the beaters of yore, the Vintage Bomber has a cork core. However, instead of that core being covered in genuine lamb’s wool as the old beaters were, Vater’s reproduction uses a synthetic material. But it has the same sound and texture, and I’m willing to bet that it will hold up better.

Educator and clinician Ed Thigpen often talks of “feathering” the bass drum. Although I learned to play a bass drum softly, it never sounded very “feathery” to me—until I replaced my felt beater with the Vintage Bomber. Wow! That’s the sound I’ve heard Thigpen get.

So is the Vintage Bomber *just* for playing soft? Hardly. The word “Bomber” is appropriate, because when you lay into a drum with this beater, you get the big sound that the bebop pioneers referred to as “dropping bombs.”

If you need to get an attack “click” from your bass drum in order for it to project through extreme volumes, then the Vintage Bomber is *not* the beater for you. But if you’re looking for a fat sound that maximizes the low end while minimizing the impact sound, check it out. It packs quite a punch, yet it’s easier to control in terms of getting a fuller range of dynamics from feathers to bombs. List price is \$28.50.

(781) 767-1877, [www.vater.com](http://www.vater.com).

**Rick Mattingly**