

# Vater Sugar Maple And Player's Design Sticks

How Sweet It Is!

## HITS

Sugar Maple sticks offer durability with light feel

Player's Design models aptly suit their namesakes' styles

all sticks straight and pitch-matched

by Chap Ostrander



Vater's new Sugar Maple line offers versions of several of their most popular hickory designs. They've also released new artist models in their Player's Design series. Let's take a look at all this variety.

### Sugar Maple Series

Lightweight yet durable, Vater's Sugar Maple models are perfect for drummers playing in smaller venues where low volume is key—or who just like the comfortable grip of a big stick without a big stick's weight.

Sugar maple is also very dense, so the sticks elicited piercing highs from cymbal bells. (Nylon-tip versions had even more crystalline highs.) Rimclicks were very sharp as well. Now let's check out the individual models.

**Sweet Ride:** The very thin Sweet Rides feel light and delicate. Their small wood tips create a soft voice, but with no loss of clarity on cymbals. The tone on a ride cymbal was darker than that of the other models, perhaps due to the short taper. That taper doesn't affect the overall balance, but does lend some stiffness to the feel.

**7A:** These sticks had greater flexibility, a lighter touch on the ride, and a brighter sound than that of the Sweet Rides. The nylon tip resembled that of a 5A, while the wood tip was a ball type. In terms of balance, the nylon-tip model had a slightly heavier feel toward the front end, which gave greater definition and response on the ride cymbal. The wood-tip sticks felt more evenly balanced and were lighter on the ride. I liked them both.

**8A:** The 8A's moderate diameter and very long taper gave it a light, easy-moving feel. The barrel tip provided punch, but the overall size of the stick kept the power under control. The sound on cymbals was light and articulate. On drums the stick was all about control and energy.

**Recording:** These sticks were like a slightly heavier version of the 8A. The balance was even, though the shorter taper gave the sticks a bit more impact power. The voice of the stick on the ride was clear but somewhat darker than that of the 8A. As soon as I picked these sticks up, I felt like playing jazz.

**5A:** This is a good all-around stick in balance and sound. The medium taper gives flexibility to the playing feel. The teardrop tip makes lots of contact with cymbals and drums for a broad, full sound (though the nylon tip definitely sounds brighter and higher than the wood tip does). This is a workhorse stick that just about anyone could use with success.

**Fusion:** The Fusion model has bit more heft but a longer taper than the 5A, resulting in a very pleasing balance. It had a bright, full voice on cymbals, with extremely good definition on the ride. These sticks were yet another example of the nylon-tip version being slightly heavier in the front than the wood-tip version. Either way, this would be a useful stick for imparting greater power into your playing.

**5B:** Take the 5A, increase its diameter and shorten its taper slightly, and you have the 5B. The increased diameter at the shoulder moves the weight up to the tip, enhancing both the impact and the durability. There was very little difference in sound between the nylon and wood tip models. In fact, this model was very close in sound to the 5A—there's just more of it.



### Player's Design Models

Artist models are always interesting, because you get to use the same stick that your favorite player has designed. I was impressed by the differences in the feel and response within this group, which is right in line with the variety of playing styles and gigs represented by the sticks' namesakes.

**Michael White's Pocket Monster:** This fairly thin stick has a rounded barrel tip and a short taper—a combination that makes it a true monster for laying down a deep pocket. The sound from cymbals and drums is direct and full. I got especially good articulation and definition from the ride.

**Stewart Copeland Standard:** This was a real feel-good pair of sticks, probably the most evenly balanced of the lot. The sound was bright on cymbals and drums due to the rounded oval tip. The taper is fairly long, making the response even and predictable.

**John Blackwell Matrix:** This is a comfortable-feeling stick, even at 16 $\frac{1}{8}$ " long. Its rather small, barrel-shaped tip provided clarity and articulation but a fairly soft sound on the ride cym-

bal. The weight and length pulls more sound from the kit.

**Steve White's Hitmaker:** I was surprised at a hickory stick measuring 16 $\frac{1}{4}$ " long having such great balance and feel. With the same diameter as the Matrix, the Hitmaker had a shorter taper and an acorn tip, making it louder and more direct.

**Josh Freese's H-220:** The H-220 is a pretty good-sized stick. Its short taper and thick shoulder produced increased depth from cymbals and drums. But I was impressed by the fact that the size and weight didn't hold me back at all. The feel was much like that of the smaller models, just with a bigger sound.

**Joey Heredia's Lowrider:** The Lowrider is the only artist model in maple. Its oval wood tip softens the sound on cymbals, producing dark tones. The voice of the stick was very expressive, with a lot of definition on all fronts. Rimclicks were ferocious.

### Conclusion

The new sticks from Vater are an impressive group. Their finish was flawless, and they were all straight and matched in pitch. (Vater sticks are tone-matched by computer.) The Sugar Maple series offers a lighter, more delicate feel. The Player's Design models have been shaped to meet the needs of world-class drummers from different styles of music. Get your hands on some and try them out!

## THE NUMBERS

Sugar Maple	
Sweet Ride	(.530" diameter, wood tip only)
7A	(.540" diameter, wood or nylon tip)
8A	(.555" diameter, wood tip only)
Recording	(.560" diameter, wood tip only)
5A	(.570" diameter, wood or nylon tip)
Fusion	(.580" diameter, wood or nylon tip)
5B	(.605" diameter, wood or nylon tip)
(Note: All Sugar Maple sticks are 16" long.)	
List prices:	wood tip <b>\$11.85</b> per pair, nylon tip <b>\$12.30</b> per pair

Player's Design	
Michael White's Pocket Monster	(16" long, .540" diameter)
Stewart Copeland Standard	(16" long, .555" diameter)
John Blackwell Matrix	(16 $\frac{1}{8}$ " long, .570" diameter)
Steve White's Hitmaker	(16 $\frac{1}{4}$ " long, .570" diameter)
Josh Freese's H-220	(16" long, .580" diameter)
Joey Heredia's Lowrider	(16 $\frac{1}{8}$ " long, .580" diameter)
(Note: All Players Design sticks are wood-tip only. All models are hickory except for Joey Heredia Lowrider, which is maple.)	
List prices:	<b>\$12.90</b> per pair

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

