

Vater Xtreme Design, Rikki Rockett, And Cyrus Bolooki Sticks

More Can Sometimes Be Less...With Good Results

HITS
unique construction and materials

distinctive sound

by Chap Ostrander

First came Vater's 5A and 5B models. If they weren't tough enough, you could move up to the Power 5A or 5B—which are longer and heavier—or to the Rock model, which is longer and heavier still. However, while beefier sticks give you more power and volume, they also present challenges. Your hands need to contend with the increased weight and length.

The idea of Vater's new Xtreme Design series was to come up with a stick strong enough to surpass the Power 5A and 5B, without approaching the heft of the Rock model. Vater director of artist relations & advertising Chad Brandolini sent us a pair of each new model within the series. He also sent samples of the standard 5A and the Power 5A so that we could compare them to the XD sticks.

The Power 5A is 1/2" longer than the standard 5A, has a larger diameter, and has a *much* shorter taper. This front-loaded design increases the sturdiness of the stick, at the cost of some of the rebound and sensitivity. The new Xtreme Design sticks have a much longer taper than their Power cousins, shifting the weight of the stick back from the front end.

In addition to the Xtreme Design models, Vater also sent samples of their most recent Players Series introductions: the Cyrus Bolooki Commander and Rikki Rockett's Bottle Rockett. Let's take a look at all of these new sticks.

XD-5A

The XD-5A (length: 16 1/2", diameter: .580") is an impressive stick. While it keeps the grip size and weight of the Power 5A, its longer taper distributes that weight over a greater area. As a result, response and control were greatly improved over that of the Power model. The balance made them easier to handle, and I didn't feel like I was playing with clubs.

The XD-5A's long, barrel-style tip also gave it an increased contact zone with my ride cymbal. The sound was clean and distinct, but at the same time offered more complex overtones than were produced by the other 5A models. Any slight change in the angle of my playing would result in interesting tones. The nylon-tip models didn't have as much of this quality. Their tips were slightly more rounded, giving a more concentrated sound. This was a common trait of the nylon-tip versions of the other Xtremes as well.

I used the XD-5As while in rehearsal for a local show. Even though the sticks were heavier and longer than a traditional 5A, there was lots of response, and I always felt that I had full control. In other words, I didn't feel as if I had to be playing louder. But if I *wished* to play loud, the sticks were there for me.

XD-5B

The heavier XD-5Bs (length: 16 1/2", diameter: .610") produced a more focused sound than the 5As did, with a stronger attack. I'm usually not a fan of 5B sticks in general, but this model didn't feel as

heavy as I expected, and the weight distribution gave the sticks greater playing response than that of other 5Bs. The rounded barrel tip produced the same overtones as the 5A.

XD-Rock

The XD-Rock model (length: 16 1/2", diameter: .630") is designed in the same style as the others, with the rounded barrel tip and the long taper. The grip is definitely larger than that of the standard Rock model, and the stick is heavier overall. But the taper and the resulting weight distribution gave the stick much more "feel" than the standard Rock stick offers. While it produced the impact power and volume of some marching sticks I've played, it felt better and was easier to control. It was like a war club with finesse.

Cyrus Bolooki's Commander

Cyrus Bolooki of New Found Glory designed his Commander model to embody elements that he liked from previous Vater sticks. It has a full-sized barrel-type tip, a grip size (.590") that puts it between a 5A and 5B, and a 16 1/4" length that's just over that of a 5A. The stick proved surprisingly responsive and well balanced. The tip *looked* large, but in use it didn't feel that way. I tried the sticks out in a variety of styles, and they produced distinct and full sounds from cymbals and drums.

Rikki Rockett's Bottle Rockett

The Bottle Rockett has the grip size of a 5A (.580") and the length of a 5B (16 3/8"). It features a unique contoured "handle" as an integral part of the grip. The idea is to keep your hold on the stick secure while playing or twirling. The sticks have a gradual taper, and the resulting balance gave me lots of rebound, making the sticks unusually sensitive. I found them applicable for use in all styles. They were enjoyable and comfortable to play with. (The twirling I'm still working on.)

Conclusion

Vater has been working hard to offer drummers stick choices that satisfy their particular needs. The Xtreme Design Series offers increased weight and durability without sacrificing response. I found it refreshing to use a heavy stick that still offered good playability. The two new artist-designed sticks reflect the style of their namesakes' playing, and are thoughtfully designed and well finished. Good job all around.

THE NUMBERS

	Wood Tip	Nylon Tip
XD-5A	\$12.45	\$12.90
XD-5B	\$12.45	\$12.90
XD-Rock	\$12.45	\$12.90
Cyrus Bolooki's Commander	\$13.50	N/A
Rikki Rockett's Bottle Rockett	\$13.50	N/A

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