

MODERN DRUMMER REVIEW: SEPTEMBER 2011

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GIG GRIPS

DUALLIST

by Don Soprani

Letting a drumstick fly during a performance might be a drummer's worst nightmare. Many accessory items, ranging from gloves to tape to wax, have been employed to counter the effects of sweaty hands and an overly relaxed grip. Gloves, however, can eliminate the intimate connection between drummer and drumstick. Tape products tend to get sticky with continued use, and waxes leave a residue on sticks and on anything else the waxed portion of the stick touches, such as rims.

Having had mixed results with all those methods, I was eager to try something new. Gig Grips, which were developed by Duallist specialty pedal designer Kevin Mackie, are the essence of simplicity. Let's check them out.

DESIGN AND APPLICATION

Gig Grips consist of a pair of thin, flexible bands constructed from a high-tech rubber compound. Each band is approximately 1/2" wide and 3-1/2" long. The bands are off-white in color and have a small hole at each round-ed, slightly flared end. The instructions provided with the product direct the user to slide each holed end over the butt of a drumstick to form a loop. This loop is positioned as desired along the shaft to accommodate your preferred gripping point on the stick.

STRANGE AT FIRST

The Gig Grips bands felt foreign at first, and I had to adjust the finger loops several times to find the proper fit. I purposely played with a very loose grip to determine whether Gig Grips would keep the drumsticks securely tethered to my hands. As my practice session continued, I found myself being increasingly less aware of the looped bands.



Matched-grip players should experiment with loop placement around their index or middle finger to determine which is more comfortable. For traditional grip, the loop goes around the thumb.

The theory behind Gig Grips is that securing the sticks to your hands by means of the looped bands allows you to play with a looser, more relaxed grip, which helps reduce fatigue, stress, and strain.

Eliminating excessive vibration and the need for over-gripping can help drummers avoid wrist and arm problems such as repetitive stress injury and carpal tunnel syndrome. Gig Grips are also said to extend the life of drumsticks-by rotating the loops, you can alter the point of impact, effectively distributing the wear and tear evenly around the shaft.

TRIAL BY PLAYING

Sitting down behind the kit in my rehearsal room, I unwrapped a brand-new pair of my favorite sticks, which I felt would be ideal for this trial due to their slick and somewhat slippery finish. I play traditional grip, so I placed the finger loop around my left thumb. I then placed the loop of the other stick around the middle finger of my right hand.

If there was any improvement in the

action of the sticks off the drumhead with the Gig Grips, it was subtle at best. A more obvious benefit of the bands was not having the sticks slide forward while I played-the finger loops kept my grip right on the sweet spot of the stick.

Over several days of testing, I never dropped a drumstick. While the bands have a smooth surface and caused no skin irritation, they seemed to sit better with matched versus traditional grip. As continued use produced the usual denting and splintering of the stick, I shifted the bands' placement to allow for more even wear.

VERDICT

I'm quite impressed with Gig Grips' elegant, straightforward design. The bands employ a high-tech material to produce a surprisingly low-tech solution to a problem that many drummers contend with. Allowing drummers to play with a relaxed grip, with the freedom to focus on musicality instead of technique, is no small feat. Other benefits, like elongating the life of your drumsticks, are icing on the cake. If you find that you have difficulty hanging on to your sticks as your hands start to sweat or get a bit fatigued, Gig Grips should prove to be a valuable aid. List price: \$12.99 for one pair, \$23.50 for two pairs. giggrips.com