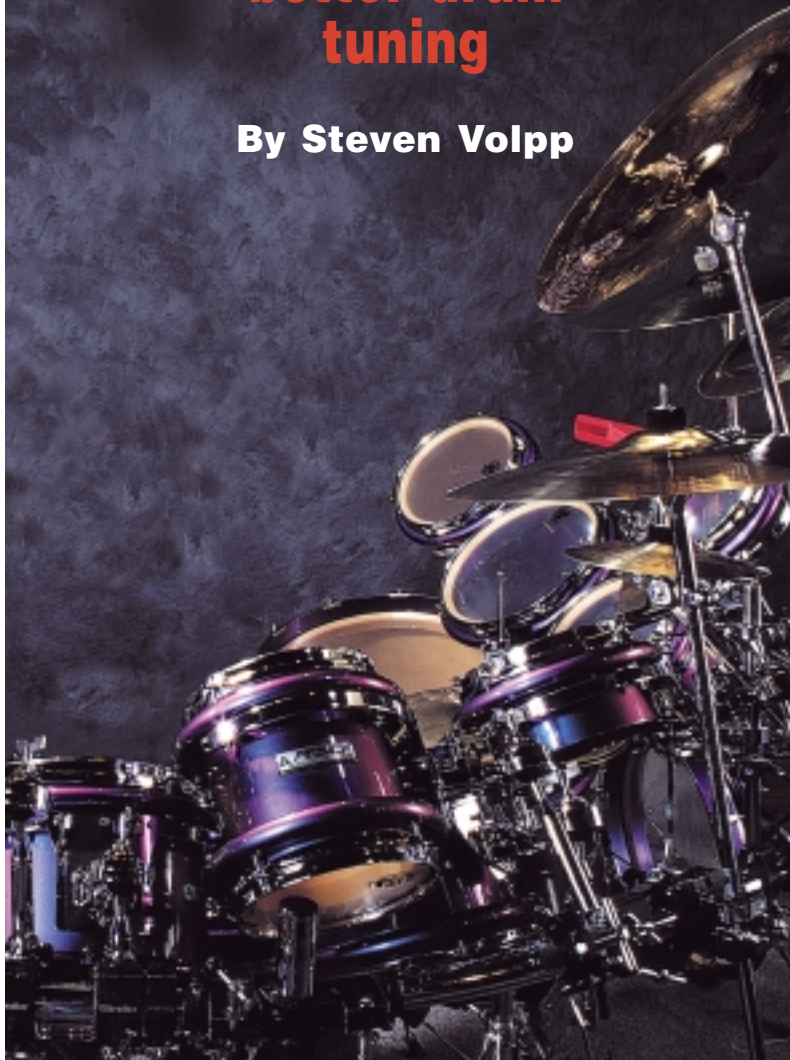


THE ULTIMATE DRUM TUNING GUIDE

Ten steps to
better drum
tuning

By Steven Volpp



1 It's not hard

The first hurdle to overcome in obtaining a good drum sound is that tuning a drum is not hard. Many books, articles, and videos have been written about it over the years, but instead of giving you something else to learn, this guide will let you apply what you already know to tuning your drums, and you will soon agree that tuning your instrument is not hard.

2 Like tuning a guitar

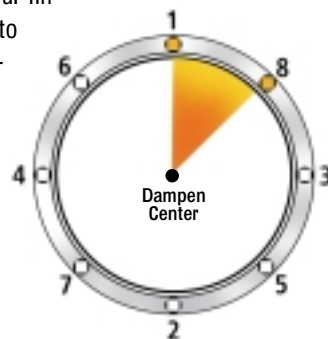
Can you tune a guitar? Even most "non-musicians" can recognize pitch differential. Tuning a drum is all about recognizing pitch differential. I strongly suggest getting any instrument, like a guitar, and spending some time listening to the pitches between strings. Practice until you can hear not only if two strings are close, but if there is any wavering in pitch as both strings sustain. Listen until you can tell which string is high and low while both strings are resonating.

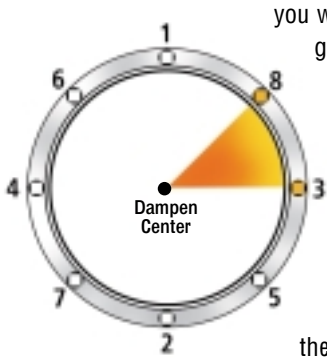
I recommend a few weeks of practice, not on a drum. I know it may be hard to have the patience to wait, but getting a good sense of pitches and their relationships, is crucial to simplifying your drum tuning. You will learn through this process that very small adjustments made to a string will cause a major adjustment in tuning. All of these practices carry over directly to the drum.

3 Simplify

Why did we start with a guitar? Believe it or not, a guitar is easier to tune than a drum. Each string vibrates between two fixed fulcrums (the nut and the bridge) that are also in a straight line. A drum has four to ten different adjustment points as opposed to a guitar's one. The head is round, which can create a multitude of odd order harmonics.

So, how do we make all those variables simple? Easy. Place your drum on a drum stool. This will dampen the bottom head so we only have to listen to one head at a time. It will also make tuning much easier. This is VERY important. Tap the drum about one inch from the rim by a lug. Then tap the drum at the next lug. You may or may not hear a difference. Now place your index finger in the middle of the head with a slight pressure (the pressure you would place on a guitar string if you were going to produce a harmonic). Now tap one of the same lugs. Stop the head from vibrating, and tap the next adjacent lug. Do you hear a much greater difference? That is because by dampening the head in the middle with your finger, you are now listening to the head between your finger and the lug. This is what makes tuning so simple. Tap at each lug and only listen to the head resonate in that area. Simply adjust the two adjacent lugs so that the pitches match, just like



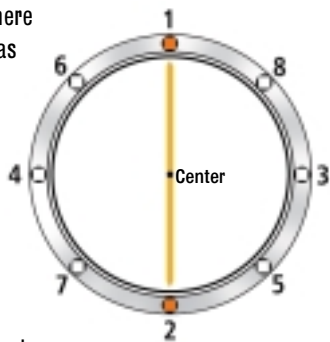


you were tuning a guitar. When you have lugs one and eight tuned, move to eight and three, and so on around the drum. Keep

doing this until the entire head is in tune with itself. If you want to then tune the entire head higher or lower to meet your playing situation, go ahead, and then just re-tune lug to lug to get the optimum sound.

4 1-2 relationship

Have you ever had a drum where one lug was too high, yet the tension rod was as loose as it would go? That was because the lug that was straight across from the lug that is all the way out (1-2) was too tight. To illustrate this principal, tune the head so that



the pitch is the same at two adjacent lugs. Raise the pitch one half turn directly across from one of the lugs that is in tune (1-2). When you go back and check your tuning that was perfect, you will find that the lug directly across from the lug you tightened, is now sharp. Understanding the 1-2 relationship will help you get a drum with a head that is way out of range, back under control.

5 Repeat section 3 for the bottom head.

6 Tap the bottom head

Then dampen, and tap the top head. Decide which pitch is best for how you want the drum to sound and move the other head to that pitch by adjusting the lugs in the numerical sequence shown.

7 Adjust one head

Once both heads are the same pitch, you should hear the best drum sounds you've ever heard coming from your drums. You may want to tune the bottom head higher or lower depending on your playing situation, but for now, just try to get the entire drum in tune. This will also give you the most sustain.

8 Practice

Always listen to your drums. If you are practicing alone or in a band situation,

always use that time to listen to your instruments. Does the 12 sustain as much as the 14? Always listen to your drums.

You will find that the confidence you will get by knowing that your drums sound great all the time will help your playing. And your bandmates will greatly appreciate it too, for the same reason you love to play with a bass player that has a "killer rig".

9 Practice when you are not practicing

What? Really! Don't just try and tune at band practice. You probably can't hear your drums with the guitar player in the room anyway. Take a small tom home and practice. Take the heads off while you are watching TV and then tune it up. Tune it high, then low. Practice every chance you get. You will be very surprised at what that drum sounds like when you put it on your kit next to the other drums that didn't get any "love".

10 Don't Stress

Don't worry about it too much. If you get frustrated, just put the drum back on the kit and play for a while. Tuning is about listening. And listening to our drums is what we all love to do.

I hope this helps. We will get into this further in future *Monitor* issues.

Stay tuned. ▲

Philip Glass *continued from page 8*

minimalism creates a piece that gives the film new vigor and life, enhancing the powerful visual images with clarity and precision. Glass's musical score is performed with intensity and sweeping power by the Kronos Quartet, one of the most respected new music ensembles.

"Many films have been made on Dracula since the original in 1931, however, none are equal to the original in eloquence or the sheer power to move us," stated Philip Glass in explaining his attraction to the project after being approached by Universal.

"The film is considered a classic. I felt the score needed to evoke the feeling of the world of the 19th century-for that reason I decided a string quartet would be the most evocative and effective. I wanted to stay away from the obvious effects associated with horror films. With Kronos, we were able to add depth to the emotional layers of the film," he further added.

The new score will be showcased this fall in live concert performances featuring Philip Glass and the Kronos Quartet. The concerts, billed as "Dracula: The Music and Film" are scheduled for London, New York, Oakland, and Los Angeles.

In addition, Nonesuch Records will release the soundtrack performed by the Kronos Quartet in conjunction with the home video release. The scored Dracula makes the sixth recorded teaming of Philip Glass and the Kronos Quartet since their first official collaborative recording in 1995 for the film *Mishima* and the first since 1995 when the composer and ensemble recorded Kronos Quartet Performs Philip Glass.

With the addition of Philip Glass' score, *Dracula* has been transformed into something uniquely, yet disquietingly, familiar. Enhanced by the power of the Kronos Quartet's playing, the scored *Dracula* at last is an experience to be savored both visually and musically. ▲