



Selecting a Snare Drum Head Sound, Response and Durability

When you are in the process of changing the heads on any drum, your focal point should be on the sound. If you put a totally inappropriate head on your drum you will spend a lot of time performing frustrating tuning rituals, trying to force out a sound that the head will not produce, and pulling out your hair.

Getting the right sound comes down to selecting the right head. This process is particularly important for the snare drum. While most people clap on beats one and three, drummers mark the pulse on beats two and four and provide the so-called backbeat. The snare drum backbeat is the heart of the drummer's craft and is the necessary punch that fuels most pop, rock, funk, hip-hop, blues and world music. The snare drum is also a drummer's main sonic "thumb print". The tuning and choice of head on your snare drum can provide a recognizable sound by which any listener can identify your signature style from any other.

The Batter

What sound are you looking for? If you can envision it, you can find it in the Evans collection. For years, Evans has been at the forefront of custom-tailoring snare drum heads for any conceivable musical situation. If you are having trouble expressing your sound take a look at the Evans Sound Spectrum chart. It will stimulate your creativity and help you narrow your search. In determining your desired snare sound it is also very helpful to listen to other drummers to define and refine your own favored tunings and skin choices.

The batter head, is the head that you physically hit with the stick. It is important not to strike the snare side sticks because this will result in a puncturing or denting of the snare side head and a deterioration of quality in the overall snare drum sound. Although the batter head is designed for durability the snare side head aims at being extremely sensitive.

Assuming that you want a bright sound and you're not an extremely hard-hitter. The Evans coated G1 should serve as the foundation of your search. The G1 is a head that responds well to a strike from a drumstick due to its firm but slightly forgiving feel. The versatility of the head also makes it ideal for brushes. Because of its coating the G1 head promotes solid swish sounds for all brush players. When correctly tuned, it will yield a full-bodied tone even with the snares off. This is an important point that players often don't consider when selecting a snare drum head.



If you hope to achieve maximum brightness when hitting the center of the head, the G1 is certain to deliver. If you introduce rimshots on every backbeat—that is, hit the batter head and rim simultaneously, you will increase the brightness and the projection of any head exponentially. While most drummers consider the G1 to be the optimum head in terms of response, sensitivity, durability, and brightness, the Evans G2 series is ideal for players employing frequent rimshots. The G2 will boost the sustain on the snare drum rimshot, and fatten up the overall attack and character of the snare sound as a whole.

If you are a very hard-hitting player and have a particular affinity for rimshots the Evans ST will fulfill your musical and financial needs. Like the G2 the Evans ST is comprised of two plies, but those plies are thicker and will promote longer head life. The impressive thing about the Evans ST is that, while it has two thicker plies it avoids a thudding, muted effect, and instead embodies the exact opposite. The durability of this head has no negative impact on the responsiveness and brightness of the head. It will provide snare action at the flick of a finger nail, while the rimshots still ring with unprecedented power.

Muffling

Muffling of a snare drum was something drummers formally did with gooey appliqués and duct tape. Many years ago Evans modified and improved this regimen and began designing heads with slender internal damping strips and tiny vents that release air and selectively curb high overtones. The Genera HD and Genera HDD are two prime examples of such “pre-muffled” heads. They are capable of reproducing the frequencies you’d hear on a professionally recorded snare drum track. Glen Kotche, drummer for the group Wilco, uses these dry vents for another reason. He threads springs, chains and sonic noisemakers into the holes for a distinctive jingle. When he strikes his HD head, the normal snare drum is accompanied by the clamoring of the accessories he adds. This is the definition of a signature sound that every listener would be able to recognize.

The advent of Evans’ EC series signified that heads were not pre-muffled, but rather pre-treated to remove only harsh overtones, leaving the body of the sound intact. The EC series promotes a modern, ambient backbeat, while the “EC rings” on the inner circumference harness and eliminate “bad ring”. With two layers of film for durability, and an optional reverse dot for durability, the EC heads embody contemporary snare drum sounds, in both high and low tunings.

This lesson should serve a summary in the selection process for a snare drum batter head. The important thing to remember is that with the right snare head from Evans you can create the sounds and make the music you have always wanted to.



Snare-Side Selection

The snare-side, or bottom head, is made up of a thin film that enhances the response of the wire snare strands strung across it. Evans offers a snare head series that includes the Hazy 200, Hazy 300, and Hazy 500. For ultimate sensitivity the Hazy 200 is ideal, especially for playing with a lot of rolls, buzzes and soft brush or mallet work. If you're a harder hitter, however, you might consider the Hazy 300 and 500 models. These thicker models will be able to sustain the crack of a drum stick and survive the rush of air sent through the snare with each hit. If you're a Stadium Class A Hitter, you might compromise the sensitivity of a snare side head only slightly and ensure yourself durability with a thicker head. You will still get plenty of snare sizzle with a thicker head and it will alleviate any concern about a the head breaking or popping during a performance. The Hazy 300 is probably the best snare side head for an overall balance between sensitivity and life span. It will retain a bright snare drum sound when the tension is kept firm and tighter than the batter, while when loosened, it will make your snare backbeat spread like you were playing in an empty concert hall.

In summation examining the choices that other Evans artists make and perusing the Sound Spectrum Chart as references can be incredibly helpful in identifying how you want you want your drums to sound. It should be noted that when a snare is hit in the dead-center it will sound completely different than a snare hit with a rimshot. This is essential to remember when selecting a snare batter head and in testing various heads a rimshot may present brightness you thought was unattainable when you tapped the same head quietly. Similarly, a head that already has a high brightness level can garner a stinging responsive sound for the listener when a rimshot is played. All of these factors are specific to the individual player and are the components that make each drummers sound. Use this advice and create and define your own.