

## PRODUCT CLOSE-UP



# Beier 15" Steel Snare Drums

Vibrant and versatile with supreme clarity and a full range of tones.

There's been a bit of buzz building around the snares coming from Jim Beier's shop in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. Blue Öyster Cult's Jules Radino, Olivia Newton-John's Mark Beckett, and Charlie Daniels' Pat McDonald have been using them live, and Nashville session ace Tommy Harden has been singing Beier's praises in the studio. (I first became aware of Beier's handiwork from following Harden's posts on Instagram.)

The premise behind Beier drums, according to Jim, is to provide "a traditional, classic-looking line of drums that are a go-to workhorse for players." The focus is on the sound first, and Beier goes to great lengths to ensure that every drum in a particular size sounds identical. Jim manually rolls and welds the shells, and he cuts the snare beds himself. The final finishing process is outsourced, but everything else is done in-house, including the engraving on the company's bridge-style lugs. "I'm a one-man show, and I even haul my own steel," says Jim. "I wanted to do this old-school with a bunch of hand tools, and it's the only way I'll ever do it."

### TECH SPECS

**Shells:** 1.5mm steel

**Sizes:** 4x15 and 5.5x15

**Lugs:** tube and etched bridge-style

**Hoops:** 2.3mm triple-flange steel

**Wires:** 20-strand snappy

**Finishes:** gloss white and textured black

**Drumheads:** Remo Coated CS batters and Hazy Ambassador bottoms

**Prices:** \$535 (4x15) and \$495 (5.5x15)

15" was always a standout for me," he says. We were sent two 15" Beier drums to review, one that's 4" deep and one that's 5.5". Let's check them out!



### 4x15

The 4x15 Beier snare was conceptualized by touring/session drummer Mark Beckett. The drum features a 1.5mm rolled-steel shell, eight tube lugs, a gloss-white finish, and a Gibraltar piccolo throw-off. There's something pretty magical about this drum. It sounds fatter and fuller than a typical 4x14 piccolo, yet it retains the immediate response and sensitivity you'd expect from such a shallow shell. The overtones are plentiful but musical, and they're easily controlled via tuning or applying minor amounts of muffling.

Medium tuning produced an incredible singing tone that worked great for an all-purpose sound, especially in the recording studio. Tighter tunings brought out more snap without choking the body of the tone. Lower tunings sounded extra-fat and fluffy, but the drum remained crisp and articulate throughout. No wonder this model is showing up in Nashville studios; it's a true workhorse.



### 5.5x15

The 5.5x15 Beier is also rolled from 1.5mm steel, but it features a textured black finish, hand-engraved bridge-style lugs, and a Dunnet R7 three-point throw-off. From a strictly sonic perspective, this version was my favorite of the two. The extra depth made it sound a bit fatter, and it had a bigger and more powerful tone that I could feel throughout my body as I hit it.

The overtones are a bit brighter and more prominent on the 5.5x15 version, especially at higher tunings, which is advantageous when trying to cut through loud but unmiked gigs. A touch of muffling might be required when using this drum with close mics in

the studio. But the overtones it produced were very pure, and they didn't ring out for too long. If you're careful with the tuning you could take advantage of the overtones to make the snare sit perfectly within the mix.

I loved how balanced and full this snare sounded when tuned to a medium tension. That would be my starting point for any backbeat-oriented gig. It also excelled at low tunings for smacking classic-rock sounds, and its super-low voice is so fat it's ridiculous.

It's a good thing these snares are reasonably priced; you're probably going to want them both.

**Michael Dawson**

**Check out a video demo of these snares at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).**

## Remo Dorado Cajon

Deep, resonant tones and removable snares for greater sonic options.

**R**emo's new Dorado cajon is a traditional fixed-faceplate instrument that's handcrafted in California using birch plywood and high-quality compression springs with over 400 coils. The cajon has deep resonance and a lot of versatility. The increased low-end resonance is a result of its construction. Rather than having a faceplate that's screwed into place, the front is completely sealed to the rest of the drum. This allows the low-end frequencies to resonate naturally as you play. The Dorado cajon is available in two different finishes, natural and amber.

In addition to the beautiful low-end resonance, the Dorado features Remo's new Quick Wedge snare system, which lets you easily remove and reattach the internal snares. This allows you to achieve the wide-open resonance of Peruvian-style cajons (no wires), as well as the crisp attack of flamenco-style cajons (with wires).

To remove the wires from the cajon, you just slide off each block of wood holding the springs and then remove the three hook-and-loop fastener strips that press the compression springs against the front plate. To reinstall the wires, simply wedge the blocks back in place and reattach the strips.

As I played the Dorado cajon, I noticed that the fixed faceplate provided a great tonal range from high to low, and I could easily change the pitch by sliding my foot across the front. The drum favored deeper and darker tones. And though high-pitch slaps and strikes close to the edge carried quite a bit of weight and depth to them, if you're looking for a bright-sounding cajon, this may not be the best option for you. But if you're looking for a deeper and more resonant cajon that boasts the versatility of converting easily from Peruvian to flamenco styles, the Dorado is a great option.

**Miguel Monroy**

### TECH SPECS

**Size:** 11.375x11.625x18.875

**Faceplate:** birch

**Snares:** removable coil springs

**Price:** \$169.95



**For a video demo of this cajon, visit [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).**

