

Timeline ...



by Billy Jeansonne

I receive many phone calls and emails regarding “vintage cymbals”. This subject seems to contain a certain amount of “grey area”, although two very good books have been written on the subject of cymbals; *The Cymbal Book* (by Hugo Pinksterboer) and *Zildjian/Cymbal Makers* (by Jon Cohan). My interest in old cymbals has increased as a matter of trying to come up with answers. One of the most common questions is “How can the age of a cymbal be determined?”. With the help of John King who has worked for Zildjian for 23 years, and Gene Short, who is very knowledgeable with vintage cymbals, I set out to create a timeline for A. Zildjian cymbals. I have included a certain amount of K. Zildjian information to help with the sequence of the Zildjian cymbal making timeline. We will feature a more detailed article about K. Zildjian and other cymbal companies in upcoming issues. If you have cymbals or information that can help us with this project, please give us a call. We will include your cymbal photos or information in these upcoming issues.

The first Zildjian cymbals were made in Constantinople, Turkey in 1623 by Avedis Zildjian I. The Zildjian “secret” process, which relates to how the metals are put together to allow the integrity of the alloy to maintain itself as it’s being processed into a cymbal, was passed down to the eldest son of each successor of the Zildjian family. The “secret” was ultimately passed down to Keropé Zildjian II who made cymbals in Turkey under the K. Zildjian & Cie trademark. Keropé II passed the secret to Aram Zildjian in 1909, who had set up the Zildjian factory in Bucharest, Rumania after being forced out of Turkey. Aram made Zildjian cymbals under the A. Zildjian & Cie trademark. The A. Zildjian & Cie and K. Zildjian & Cie cymbals were distributed in the U.S. by the Fred Gretsch Co. from 1926 to 1929. In 1929 Avedis Zildjian III set up the first Zildjian factory in the U.S. in Norfolk Down, Mass. Hence the U.S. Zildjian cymbals were born!

I’ve learned that determining the age of a cymbal by the trademark logo alone is very difficult because identical trademarks were reissued on Zildjian cymbals through the years to keep the trademark “alive”. The trademark, along with the taper of the

bow or profile, cup or bell size, and the hammering and lathing of a cymbal, all come into play in determining the approximate age of a cymbal. Cymbal making consistency was not as prevalent as it is today. The casting and lathing process allowed for inconsistencies which are obvious in the older cymbals. Today’s technology and process allows for very consistent manufacturing techniques which creates very consistent and clean cymbals.

Photo 1 - The A. Zildjian & Cie trademark has been used three times during the company’s history. First in 1909-1929 with cymbals made in Bucharest, Rumania. The trademark was reintroduced in the early 1970’s to 1987. The cymbal that bore this trademark is a 15” heavy cymbal. It is determined to be a 1970’s because it was made in U.S.A. The trademark was again reintroduced in 2000 with the introduction of the A. Zildjian & Cie Vintage cymbals.

1



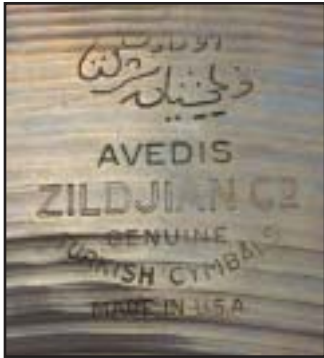
Photo 2 - The Avedis Zildjian Co. trademark was stamped on all A. Zildjian cymbals once the U. S. Zildjian factory began production in 1929. This trademark has been used several times in large (1 1/2” tall) and small (1 3/16” tall) sizes. The cymbal that bore this trademark (small size) is a 20” Ride that is determined to be from the 1950’s -1960’s.

2



Photo 3 - The “open” Avedis Zildjian Co. trademark, *Zildjian Co.*, is stamped in hollow block lettering. This trademark may

3



have appeared as early as the 1940's-1950's when cymbal sizes were as large as 31". This trademark was used again in the early 1980's. The trademark size is 1 3/4" tall. The cymbal that bore this trademark is a 22" Ride cymbal determined to be an early 1950's because of the bell size and the character of the lathing of tonal grooves of the cymbal.

4



Photo 4 - Trademarks were rolled on the cymbals using a pneumatic machine with a die rendition of the trademark. The faintly stamped trademark would sometimes occur with the first few cymbals as the correct thickness of the cymbal was determined and the proper pressure was set as not to distort the cymbal being stamped. Sometimes a "pucker" mark or "indentation" would occur from the bottom side of the cymbal if the pressure was not correctly set.

5



Photo 5 - The trademark shown is the large stamp (1 1/2" tall) which is from a 1960's 22" Ride cymbal. The Turkish writing at the top of the trademark reads "Son of Cymbal Smith".

6



Photo 6 - The trademark shown is the small stamp (1 3/16" tall) which is from a 1960's 14" Hi Hat cymbal. The trademark is identical to the larger version except for size.

Photo 7 - Crotales (from the Greek, meaning vinegar cups) The crotales used for this necklace is 2 3/4" in diameter. This was probably a promotional item from the late 1960's made for Zildjian dealers. It represents the style of the era when people were wearing beads and large necklaces.

7



8



Photo 8 - The trademark on the Crotales was hand hammered because of the size of the crotales. The conventional pneumatic trademark rolling machine could not be used on a cymbal this small.

9



10



Photo 9 & 10 - Solid paint Zildjian logo. Began in 1981-1982 and continues through today. Printed with a general printer's ink, the logo tends to wipe off easily when the cymbal is cleaned. There is an "open" version of the Zildjian logo which began in 1978.

11



Photo 11 - This trademark represents what is being used today. This "etching" process began in 1994 and is done by laser. It consists of the classic Avedis Zildjian trademark with the inclusion of a specific lot mark. The lot number helps to determine exactly when the cymbal was "born" and who made the cymbal.

Other notes of interest!

Avedis III's son, Armand, was the first Zildjian born in the U.S., followed by Robert Zildjian. Armand Zildjian became president of the Zildjian Co. upon his father's death in 1979.

Lennie Di Musio must be mentioned because of the significance he had as director of Artist Relations for the Zildjian Company. He began as a cymbal tester with Zildjian in the 1960's.

continued on page 26

Timeline *continued ...*

By the 1960's, due in large to Ringo's influence on Zildjian cymbal buying, the Zildjian Company had a 93,000 cymbal back order.

"Cie" is the French notation for "Co".

The "old" K. Zildjian cymbals were made in Turkey until 1968!

The trademarks and equipment used to make the Istanbul cymbals were brought to the U.S. by Avedis III in 1968 and were put into use to produce the "Made in U.S. A." K. Zildjian cymbals which did not hit the market until 1981.

Some of the old Turkish Zildjian cymbal trademarks were applied using three different die sets. Therefore a "shifting" would sometimes occur within the trademark causing different trademark inconsistencies.

There was much variation in weight and effect in the older cymbals and as Zildjian became more consistent in their cymbal making technique, they were able to qualify the cymbal in

a much more finite way by separating them into very specific weight and sound categories.

In Summary:

Determining the age of a cymbal, especially the "older cymbals", is somewhat difficult. Different elements of a cymbal have to be considered individually, and then all of these factors put together as a whole, to determine the *approximate* age of the cymbal in question. Definite registration dates for specific Zildjian trademarks do exist. Vintage Drummer hopes to introduce these registration dates along with the specific trademark, matched together with other aspects of the cymbal to create a more "finite" timeline. We welcome your input!



DRUM VILLAGE

PERSONALIZED STICKS
YOUR SPEC DESIGN
DOMESTIC WOODS
EXOTIC WOODS

MAPLE SNARES w/ lugs designed and machined on premise

Home of the "Butt Naked" Sticks

www.drumvillage.com

"Butt Naked"™

P.O. BOX 1381 VALRICO, FLORIDA 33595 TEL: (800) 352-2544