

# VATER EXTENDED PLAY DRUMSTICKS

Durability's not a dream, it's guaranteed

"IT CAME TO ME IN A DREAM" sounds more like a punch line than the lead to a tale of successful business inspiration. But when Vater Percussion Vice President Alan Vater awoke from a dream about playing drums with sticks that had been chemically treated to be more durable (yes, really), he thought, "That's a pretty good idea." As it turned out, developing the idea for Vater's new Extended Play drumsticks proved harder in the waking world—a lot harder—but ultimately an adventure he wouldn't trade for a thousand peaceful nights' sleep.

Over the years, numerous drumstick manufacturers have tried to make real hickory sticks last longer, and a few have claimed progress toward that goal. Alan ruled out the sole approach he'd seen that actually worked—impregnating the wood with resins—because it rendered the sticks unacceptably heavy. In an effort to make his sticks' tip and shoulder more resistant to chipping, he experimented with various chemical combinations and processes, but the promising ones

were prohibitively

expensive or difficult to apply. Around the time his exhaustive, months-long research suggested that the right formula "didn't exist" (turning his dream into something of a cruel nightmare), he discovered a uniquely talented chemist who specialized in developing durable finishes for some of the nation's most iconic structures.

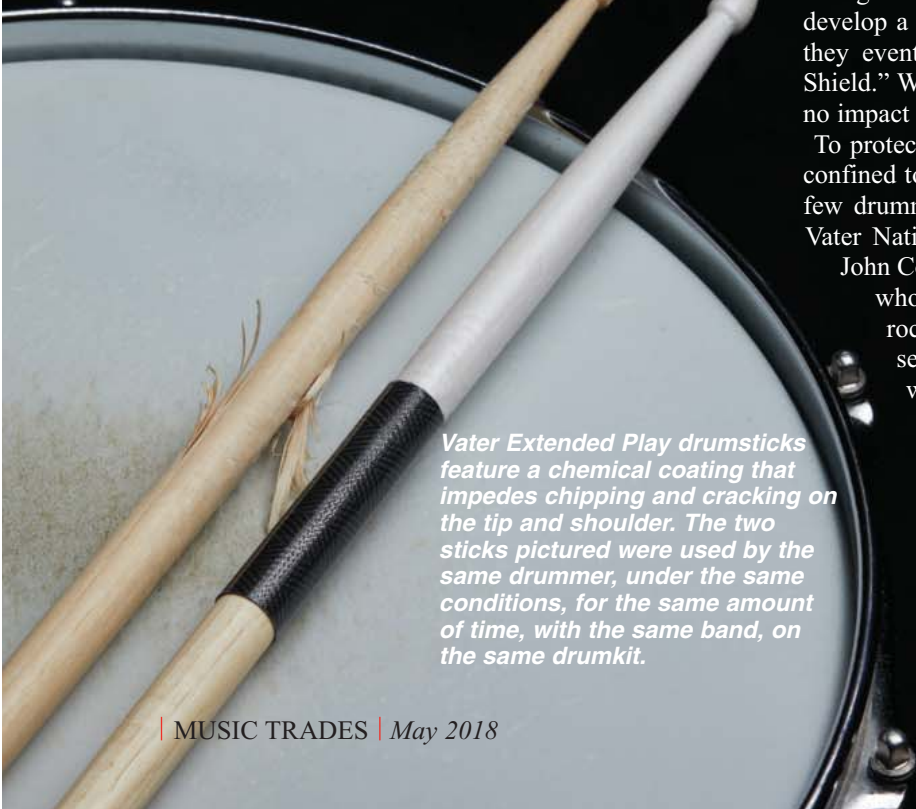
Alan worked with this expert for another six painstaking months to come up with a chemical that was not only more durable but, since it was to cover only the tip and shoulder of each stick, also compatible with Vater's existing finish. Formulated in an attractive pearlescent white that complements the natural American hickory wood, the resulting Extended Play coating effectively slows the wood's chipping and cracking.

In a separate but related quest to reinforce the stick's rimshot area, Vater's product development team initially researched heat-shrinkable sleeves in a number of different materials. When none met their standards, they set their sights on an adhesive-backed blended material that includes the ultra-strong fabrics used to make bulletproof vests. Working to develop a material with the right adhesive, weave, and look, they eventually "nailed it" and dubbed the product "Stick Shield." Weighing just 2 grams, the Stick Shield has virtually no impact on the stick's feel or balance.

To protect the new invention, prototype testing was initially confined to Vater's Holbrook, Massachusetts factory. Later, a few drummers gigging in the area field-tested them, led by Vater National Sales Manager (and Eddie Money alumnus)

John Coviello, a key contributor to the line's development, who subjected the sticks to merciless bashing in his rock band. They found that the black 3" Stick Shield section on Extended Play sticks doesn't just reduce wear and tear; it virtually eliminates it. Tests proved it so effective, in fact, that Vater guarantees Extended Play sticks against breakage from wear in the Stick Shield area.

The Extended Play line currently includes Vater's popular 3A, 5A, 5B, Power 5A, and Power 5B models, all with a choice of wood or nylon tips, as well as wood-tipped MV7 and MV8 models designed for use in corps and marching applications with a white, 5" Stick Shield. Alan reports that these marching models in particular are deliv-



*Vater Extended Play drumsticks feature a chemical coating that impedes chipping and cracking on the tip and shoulder. The two sticks pictured were used by the same drummer, under the same conditions, for the same amount of time, with the same band, on the same drumkit.*



*Vater Percussion's Alan Vater (left) and John Coviello promoting the company's new Extended Play drumsticks at the 2018 Winter NAMM show.*

ering a “tremendous” improvement in stick durability. Extended Play sticks list for \$22.60 per pair compared with

\$16.25 for Vater’s standard wood-tipped models. Vater will also soon sell the adhesive-

backed Stick Shield product separately in black 3" and white 5" widths for drummers to apply to their choice of stick brands and models. With an MSRP of \$8.99 and estimated “street” price of \$4 or \$5, the company projects that they will become a red-hot impulse buy.

Over the course of 2017, Alan devoted “probably six hours out of every day for a year” to R&D on Extended Play and Stick Shield—a year characterized by “trials, tribulations, and a steep learning curve” as the company implemented and honed new manufacturing processes. Then, racing against a planned unveiling at the 2018 Winter NAMM Show, he fine-tuned one patent on the Stick Shield and another on use of the Stick Shield in combination with the Extended Play finish formula. Although Extended Play sticks only recently began hitting store shelves, they have already become one of the hottest new product launches in Vater’s history. At least in this case, Alan figures, it was a good idea to pay attention to his dream.

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