

Bass Drum

PEDALS

by Bruce Jeansonne

In 1909, William F. Ludwig and his brother, Theobald, patented a new bass drum pedal design that would forever change drumming. The first floor type pedal with an elevated shaft had unique features, such as a beater that would spring back on its own, direct lever action of the footboard and beater, and a cymbal striker that could be moved out of position to allow the drummer to play only the bass drum itself if he chose. Ludwig pedals that followed throughout the years include the *Super Speed*, the *New Speed* (which was available with or without bearings in the shaft), and the most famous of all, the *Speed King*, which made its debut in 1937. The Speed King featured double post which concealed compression springs, concealed ball bearings in the shaft, and a reversible heel plate. This particular pedal design did not come from Ludwig's engineering department, but from one of their employees who worked in the factory.

As was common for the day in the early 1900's, drummers would present ideas for pedals to the drum companies. If the idea was used, a royalty payment plan was worked out with the drummer, and the pedal would go into production.



*Ludwig Pedal with
Cymbal Striker circa
1913*

Ludwig also used the system of installment payments, which helped tremendously in spreading its name through the vaudeville circuit. Many small regional companies were located across the country during the early 1920's, 30's, and 40's. The *Frisco* pedal came from a drum shop in the San Francisco area in the 20's, while Duplex was a small company with under 20 employees located in St. Louis which manufactured the *Heyn* pedal. Heyn was most probably the name of the person who developed the pedal design and took it to Duplex to manufacture, similar to the way Leedy manufactured the *Leedy-Fraser* pedal. In later years, Slingerland marketed the Frisco pedal and Rogers marketed pedals named the *Heyn* and *Duplex-Heyn*.

The Fraser Manufacturing Company manufactured the *Fraser Direct Stroke* pedal and *Side Pedal* in the early 1900's. The Direct Stroke was just that. It featured a center post which concealed a coiled spring, with all parts of the pedal working on a direct line from the center. It was advertised as perfectly balanced, which made it operate with practically no effort whatsoever.

*Frisco Pedal
Patented 1/9/26*



The *Side Pedal* attached to the bass drum hoop at an angle, which allowed the drummer to gain considerable space by being able to place the bass drum where it was most efficient for

space needed. The entire company, with all patents and selling rights, were sold to Leedy which continued to manufacture and market both models of Fraser pedals. The 1930's to early 40's brought the Leedy *Professional*, *Lightweight*, *Pacemaker*, and *Marathon* pedals. The Professional model featured the *Relax* footboard on a Fraser *Direct Stroke* pedal. When folded for storage, it fit into a compact 3" x 9.5" space. The new *Broadway* pedal was added to the Leedy line in the mid 1940's, which featured a double post stand and self-oiling shaft bearings.



Slingerland's Epic, AA, the HH Pedals

1963. The HH pedal, designed by George Way while at Slingerland, was the first pedal to feature enclosed spring mechanisms. With the purchase of Leedy in 1956, Slingerland offered the Leedy XL pedal with the Leedy *Shelly Mann* and Leedy # 1940 following in 1965. In the 1970's, Slingerland introduced the *Super Speed*, which was available with a one piece or split footboard.

1938 saw the introduction of the *Universal*, *Whirlwind*, *Heyn*, and *Eclipse* by Rogers Drums. The *Acme* was offered in 1946, the *Utility* in 1958, and the *Champ* in 1962. Other models from the 60's included the *Jet*, the *Duplex-Heyn* and the *Rocket*. From 1960-1983, the *Swiv-O-Matic* was a top seller for Rogers. It featured built-in spurs to prevent creeping, a positive-permanent grip beater rod clamp, and a single step fold up for storage.

It was available with a solid or hinged heel footboard. The *Supreme* was the last foot pedal offered by Rogers before they went out of business.



Ludwig & Ludwig



Duplex Pedal Patented 2/6/12



Heyn Pedal Manufactured by Duplex

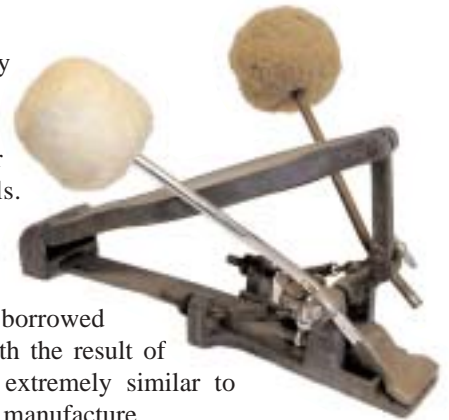


Gretsch Floating Action

Gretsch used mostly what Walberg & Aug, a company that manufactured drum hardware and accessories in the early 1900's, was making until marketing the *Floating Action* pedal. Even then, this pedal was not an original Gretsch product. The pedal started out as the *Martin Fleetfoot* pedal, which was a small company in Minneapolis in the late 30's. The company was considered to have the fastest pedal at the time. Camco, who at the time manufactured hardware, purchased the pedal rights and began manufacturing the pedals. A deal with Gretsch was later made to make the same pedal, but with Gretsch's name on the footboard for Gretsch to sell as their own. Gretsch's *Professional Drum Pedal* featured double post and pivot bearings packed in graphite for fast, easy action and the *Speed-EE* model was offered as a budget line pedal.

Out of New York City, Frank Wolf had snares, drumsets, and footpedals made under his name which he marketed through other dealers as well as in his own drum shop. After his death, his two sons continued the business until the 1970's.

Over the years many drum companies have manufactured and marketed their own line of pedals. Many times, especially in the early to mid 1900's, ideas and designs were borrowed from each other, with the result of some pedals being extremely similar to others by a different manufacture.



These pedals represent just a portion of *Frank Wolf Pedal* bass drum pedals available, presently, as well as in the past. Pedals pictured in this article are from the private collection of Bill Pace.