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PROBLEM: My floor tom is ringing too long.

TRICK: Remove one of the three floor-tom legs, turn it upside down, and insert the upside-down leg into the mounted holder (see *photo below*). Now, instead of three rubber-tipped feet, your drum will have two rubber-tipped feet and one bare-metal "foot." And, presto change-o, your floor tom's sustain should be musically shortened or curtailed. A less drastic approach might be to remove one or more of your tom legs' rubber feet. We can thank drumming great and studio legend Jim Keltner for this bit of advice.

Recording studios are where this problem often pops up, because each studio drum room will have different ceiling heights, angles, and materials, all of which can affect the way our drums ring and sound. Floor toms seem to be the most susceptible to such unwelcome change.

ALTERNATE TRICK: Experiment with the relative tuning pitches between the top and bottom heads of the drum, and/or slightly de-tune one or the other head. You can also try dampening the head with some sort of mute, such as a specially formulated gel for drums, gaffer's tape (with tissue), etc. However, remember that most external dampening solutions will deaden the head and change the nature of the stick's attack, thus changing the very nature of that one drum in your kit.

FUN HACK: If you forget to bring your floor-tom legs to a rehearsal or gig, you can always use drumsticks in place of the legs.



PROBLEM: Eyes closed

TIP: *Practice playing with your eyes open. Look at the source of the music, and do not close your eyes or stare off into space (usually off to the drummer's left...somewhere). Connect. We're trying to have a conversation up here.*

QUESTION: How do I keep my eyes on the conductor, as well as on the snare drum or tom I'm about to play?

ANSWER: Quietly (*silently*) place your sticks upon the playing surface in anticipation of playing. You will be in position and know exactly where your sticks are in relation to the playing surface. Trust us—this is a bigger deal than you might think.

QUESTION: Heels up, or heels down?

ANSWER: Both!

The short explanation is that you'll experience better control on both pedals when you master the art of playing the hi-hat and bass drum with your heels down. This method is certainly preferable when playing at soft- to medium-dynamic levels. Louder strokes invite (or demand) the use of the leg, so use heel "up" for additional weight and power. Multiple strokes on the bass drum are often best accomplished by playing heel up and gliding the foot frontwards on the pedal board in a tap-dancing motion. Practice makes perfect!

RELATED QUESTION: Shoes or no shoes?

ANSWER: Shoes.

Next question...