

## **Drum setup: Modern Drummer 2007**

What is the overall goal with the way you set up your drumset?

**Ergonomics, availability of instruments, and ease of movement certainly, but also that I should be presented with a configuration of instruments that gets my mind going- something that's full of possibilities. Hopefully it should enable me to sound a little different from the other guy.**

What size/configuration do you generally prefer (# of pieces, # of cymbals, etc.)?

**4 toms, 4 cymbals, kick, snare, hat.**

Is there anything unusual or different about the way you set up your kit? If so, what is it, and why do you do it?

**Recently I've been laying the drums out flat, in a gentle curve. That's based on the five tympani layout of a classical musician; I just find it easier to swivel a little to the left to open up the left side of the kit, rather than reach forward to the toms positioned in front of the snare as in the traditional set up. Additionally, you lose that right-hand-over-left hi-hat thing, which always seemed a bit awkward. The drawback is you need a relatively unavailable remote cable-hat, to be positioned directly in front of the central snare drum.**

**The set is symmetrical in the sense that there are two toms and two cymbals to the right of the central snare and hi-hat, and a similar setup, although different pitches, to the left. This makes for some nice combinations, or would do if I was ambidextrous. I'd give my right arm to be ambidextrous. Plus, the less sophisticated listener tends to listen with his eyes first--with my set you can clearly and easily see which stick is hitting which drum.**

**Finally, the drums are out of pitch order, so that makes for some interesting phrasing.**

What has changed over the years regarding your setup, and why?

**My kit is in a state of perpetual change, reflecting both the music and the role of the drummer, both also in perpetual change. Isn't everybody's? I've had probably 20 odd configurations over 40 years—please see the equipment page at [www.billbruford.com](http://www.billbruford.com) for details. The prime driver here seems to be the music, as it exists or as it is imagined it will exist, and what percussion instruments will give it life? In a European classical sense, I prefer to approach the music without any instruments at all, wait to see what it requires, then provide it. This has blurred in recent years as I have settled more into a jazz role, but the original thinking is still there.**

Specifics: Seat

What is your seat height?

## **22 ¼ inches**

What is the height of the crease at the back of your knee, measured while standing?

## **21 inches**

When seated comfortably at your drums, are the tops of your thighs parallel to the floor, sloping down from hip to knee, or slanted up from hip to knee?

**Parallel or sloping down a little from hip to knee.**

How did you arrive at your particular seat height, and what process did you have to go through to get there?

**It took about 5 seconds—seems obvious and logical to me.**

Specifics: Snare

Is your snare tilted toward you, flat, or tilted away from you?

**Flat.**

Do you primarily play traditional or matched grip, and how has this affected your snare positioning?

**Matched grip. I need easy access to rim shots, but apart from that, not at all.**

What is the distance measured from the ground to the top of the snare hoop, on the side of the drum closest to the throne?

## **26 ¾ inches**

How did you arrive at your particular snare angle & height?

**Just a comfortable playing position.**

Specifics: Toms: How would you describe your tom positioning? (Low or high, flat or angled, etc)

**All toms flat, and at the same height..**

Any specific reason for this?

**See above info on drum setup**

Specifics: Cymbals: How would you describe your cymbal positioning (low or high, flat or angled, etc.)

**Slight tilt towards me.**

Any specific reason for this?

**Availability and ergonomics. I need a quick movement from tom to cymbal.**

Is there anything else you'd like to add about reasons you've arrived at your specific drumset arrangement?

**Touring costs play no small part in this. With King Crimson on occasion we staged three percussion areas involving hybrid electronic and acoustic kits of one sort and another, clearly impracticable if you are playing a support slot at a jazz festival, for example. The shipping and provision of instruments is expensive, and most jazz drummers are confined to a rental set and some small “toys”, cymbals, and maybe a snare drum that they carry with them, excess baggage costs willing.**

**Generally, I'm looking for transportable, rentable or providable gear that can be configured to open up possibilities. If it looks different, chances are it'll sound different!**