



Peter Lavinger

Age: 40
Home: New York, N.Y.

Passion: Drumsticks

Peter Lavinger caught his very first drumstick at a Good Rats⁴ show in July 1980. At first, he just stowed his sticks away. But after viewing a drumstick collection at a Hard Rock Cafe, he had an idea. "It wasn't an epiphany," he says. "I just thought it would be cool to collect as many drumsticks as I could."

Today, Lavinger's stash of sticks has been featured in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum and earned a mention in the *Guinness World Records* book. Best of all, it's personal. Point to one of his 1,300-plus sticks, and Lavinger can talk for hours about its origin, its owner, the day he got it and—if you're lucky—the stick's metric weight. (Mickey Hart of the Grateful Dead used sticks that weighed 58 grams!)

Like many modern-day collectors, Lavinger operates under a strict set of self-imposed rules. For example, he must get his sticks personally from each drummer—no middlemen. "I used to get them at shows," he says. "But I got old for that." Now he relies on contacting the drummer directly to get the sticks.

His success rate is close to 100 percent (holdouts include Lars Ulrich

of Metallica), though this particular rule means he'll never score the sticks of late, great drummers like Keith Moon of the Who.

Why drumsticks: Oddly, Lavinger has zero musical talent himself. ("I play the stereo," he says. It's a joke.) But as a music fan and admitted mild obsessive, he wanted to latch on to something from his days roaming the concert scene in New York. Drumsticks just happened to be the most personal. "I suppose if they were throwing out pianos at the end of shows, I'd be catching them," he admits. "But the thing with drums is, they're not like a guitar or something. Drummers create a canvas. You can see how a drummer plays by the wear and tear on the sticks."

Highlights: If you're a classic rock fan, Lavinger has hard-to-get wares from Ringo Starr; Ringo's son, Zak Starkey, who currently plays with the Who ("Best drummer today," says Lavinger); Pink Floyd's Nick Mason; and the Rolling Stones' Charlie Watts. If you want something more contemporary, he has Dave Grohl's sticks from Nirvana's *MTV Unplugged*

session in November 1993 (they are not technically drumsticks but "multirods," which many drummers use for acoustic shows).

Lowlights: Lavinger also owns drumsticks from Ugly Kid Joe's Mark Davis and Yanni's Danny Reyes.

Famous friends: R.E.M., Pink Floyd, Neil Young and Crazy Horse, the Violent Femmes, the Rolling Stones. "Pink Floyd had me sit on the side of the stage of one of their shows," Lavinger says. "That was amazing."

Worth: Lavinger has had several offers for his collection, but won't say for how much.

What others think: "There are the believers and the nonbelievers," says Lavinger. "The believers know the music and know of the musicians, appreciate the music and are aware of the value for the market. The nonbelievers are, 'They all

look alike, you're wasting your time; what's the big deal?' I keep conversation with those people to a minimum."

Advice to fledgling collectors: Above all else, protect what you have. "You're one of the few people who have seen the entire collection," Lavinger admits, after asking me to promise not to divulge or even hint at the sticks' location.

Where to see his stuff: For now, these photos will have to do. **G**



4. Founded in Long Island, N.Y., the Rats played big East Coast venues (Madison Square Garden, the Philadelphia Spectrum, etc.) while opening for acts such as Aerosmith, Ozzy, Journey and Rush.