

interiors[®]

A photograph of a modern interior hallway. On the left, a curved staircase with a white balustrade is visible. In the foreground, a tall, black, multi-tiered sculpture sits on a black rectangular pedestal. The hallway leads to an open doorway, revealing a living room with a white armchair, a side table, and a large window. On the right wall of the hallway, a large, dark, abstract painting is displayed. A small, black, rectangular pedestal holds a lamp with a textured, light-colored shade. The walls are a light, neutral color, and the floor is a light-colored tile.

ART IN DESIGN



A&F DRUM CO.
BEAT GENERATION

TEXT: MIMI FAUCETT

Steven Gunter/PearlSnap Photography



Musical instruments have long held a place in interior design. Many elegant foyers include a black grand piano, its lid propped up, ivories ready to be tickled—or at least admired. Or perhaps it's a shapely harp, or even a particularly rare electric guitar. And in Austin, Texas, artisan drum company A&F Drum Co. is making the same case for drums.

"A piano is to harmony as drums are to rhythm, and every home should have both," says Ramy Antoun, founder and president of A&F Drum Co. and badass drummer. Antoun has played for the likes of Seal, the Black Eyed Peas and James Taylor. His musical know-how is at the heart of A&F, and is the reason for its beginning. "It was a quest to create my perfect drum," he says. In 2012, Antoun was playing a set of stadium shows in Japan and had purchased a few high-end snare drums for the events. During the performances, his new finds didn't produce the sound he had imagined. "In that very moment, I decided I was going to make my own drum," he says. Thus began the drummer's mission to find the sound that so far only existed in his head.

During the spring of 2015, Antoun was introduced to an Austin craftsman who made wooden snares out of wine barrels.

"It was a hobby for him, but I enjoyed his craftsmanship and approached him about building my drum with me," he says. The pair got to work, and six months later A&F's 4x14 Limited Edition Snare was born, defined by handmade raw brass shells with a patina reminiscent of coveted turn-of-the-century instruments; round, center-mounted brass lugs; rolled brass hoops; and meticulously cut leather washers to help absorb sound. "It was crisp and warm, articulate and resonant," says Antoun. "Like 100 years of soul captured in a modern instrument."

Antoun posted an image of the so-called "perfect drum" on his Instagram account and word spread quickly. One hundred editions sold in just under a year. Since then, Antoun has built a team of both drummers and non-drummers to craft his expanding repertoire of percussion instruments. He now has two partners: his wife, Tiffany Antoun, who handles strategy and the financial side of the business, and Josh Jones, who oversees operations. They've opened a space in a nondescript building in north Austin to accommodate their lean team of 10 and shop dog, Buckley, a Golden Retriever. Even with all the additional moving parts, Antoun still tunes every drum that leaves their shop. "It's the sound of our drums that started me on this journey, and if it doesn't have our sound, then it doesn't ship," he says.





The appeal of A&F's drums extends far beyond those who are musically gifted, though musicians objectively fawn over these pieces. A&F counts Charlie Watts of the Rolling Stones, Abe Laboriel Jr. from Paul McCartney's band, and Chris Tyrrell from Lady Antebellum as customers. The brand's drums are a study in craftsmanship, Antoun says. "Every drum we build has a completely unique patina and can be hand-engraved by an expert, local craftsman." (Antoun knows of only three such engravers in existence.) "Our drums are built by hand to last hundreds of years; each one has its own original look and serial number," he notes.

The tedious process of creating each drum carries an eight-week lead time—10 weeks for an entire kit. All of A&F's materials are sourced locally and crafted in their shop. And while the end result is a fully functioning modern drum, the novelty of the piece is not lost on the brand. A&F offers bespoke finishing processes to further customize their wood drums, which includes mixing their finishing oil with a customer's favorite scotch or espresso from a local roaster to achieve a tailored amber hue. "At the turn of the 20th century, drums were handmade; there was a simplicity about them that was not just for show," Antoun says. "We wanted to make them like they were a hundred years ago."

Antoun often mentions his desire to bring back the "traditional music room," a space dedicated solely to music-making. "My wife and I strive to create spaces in our home that provide creative inspiration for our two sons," he says. "It has breathed so much more life into our home." He argues that such a space is beneficial, regardless of musical ability. "Instruments are invitations for family and friends to gather around with the purpose of connecting rather than isolating, creating rather than consuming." ■ A&F Drum Co., anfdrumco.com

