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The global drumming e-zine

PROFILE: Dirk Brand



VAD 706



On stage



Efnote 5

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LAST YEAR, ROLAND took the big step into acoustic-looking kits. The move was part of a growing trend away from drum pads and towards triggered acoustic shells – something we'd seen years before from niche e-drum makers and DIYers.

Last month, Roland's VAD line crept even closer to pure acoustics, with quality eight-ply maple shells and a choice of stain finishes.

Together with the more acoustic look, the Japanese giant also finally unveiled its digital hi-hat, many years in the making.

We report on these developments in this edition, alongside a review of another acoustic clone – the Efnote 5 kit.

But oh, the irony! Drummers will spend up big to buy kits that emulate much cheaper acoustic drum sets. Indeed, you can buy a half-decent acoustic kit for the price of Roland's digital hi-hat alone.

This apparent contradiction in terms was one of the themes in our interview with German drummer Dirk Brand. Now on the Pearl team and working on the e/MERGE line, Brand admits that there is something strange about taking technology originally developed to create new and unique sounds and a different stage presence and applying it to the recreation of an acoustic instrument that is pretty much fully evolved.

Brand is an e-drum geek, but he also loves acoustics (Pearl gives him the best of both worlds) – and he believes there is a place for both. But then he confuses the issue by trying to stretch the capabilities of his e-drums to accommodate brush playing. And yes, he admits that his fascination for e-drum brushes sends a mixed message.

This edition is jam-packed with reviews, including a comprehensive evaluation of Simmons' new e-drum amplifiers. **digitalDrummer** has been impressed with pretty much all of Simmons' monitor products to date, and the latest editions not only add grunt and finesse simultaneously, they also open up a global market for the first time. These amps have switchable power, so they're not limited to the North American market – and anywhere else where 110v is the standard. And while the brand does not yet have any representation outside the US, Guitar Center, the company which owns Simmons, certainly does ship internationally. So, anyone can now access these products (when shipping returns to normal).

We hope you enjoy this edition of **digitalDrummer** and, as usual, welcome any feedback.

editor@digitaldrummermag.com

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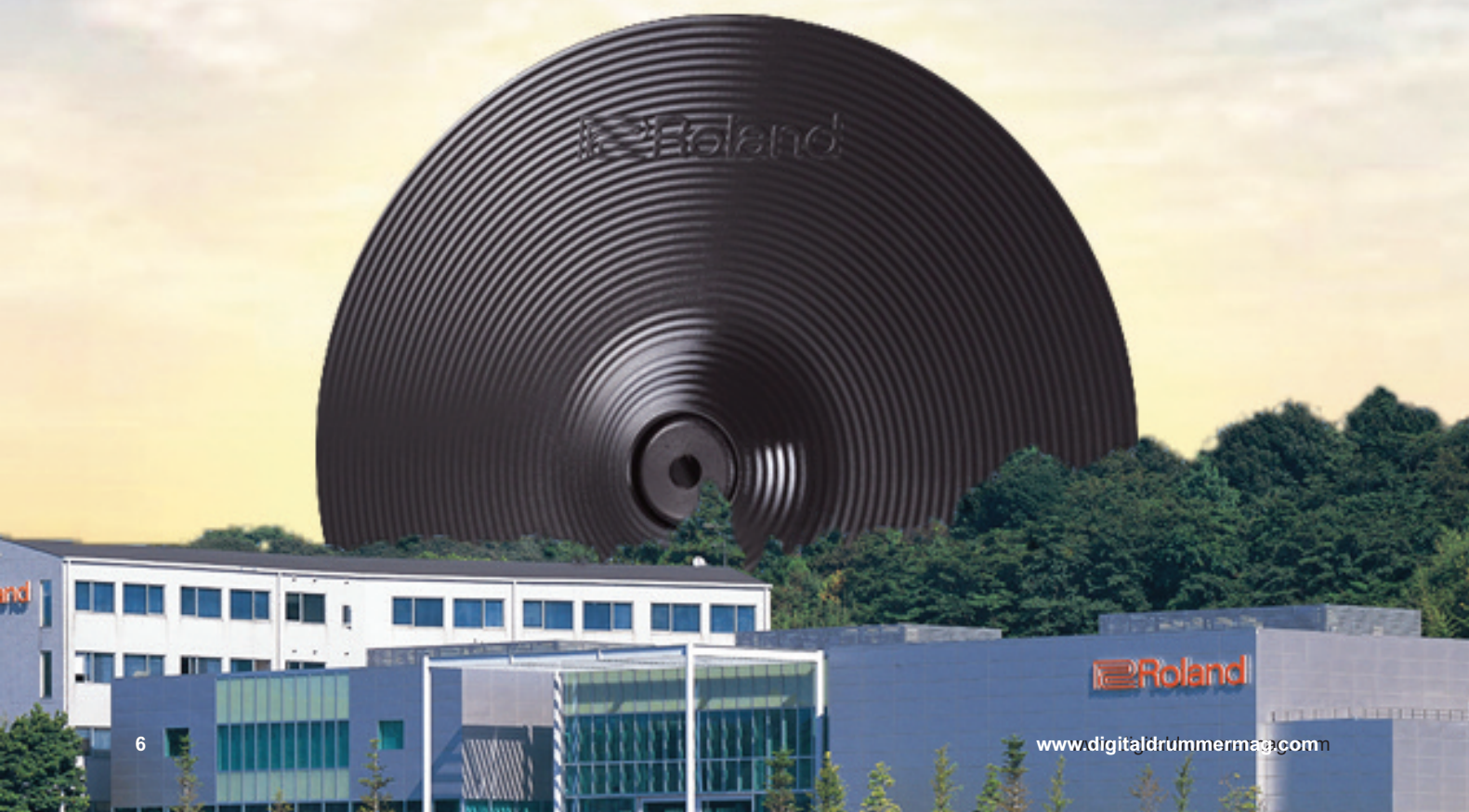
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DIGITAL HI-HAT ARRIVES





IT'S BEEN FOUR and a half years since Roland launched the TD-50 module with its redundant USB input.

Well, that USB slot is no longer just a phone charge source! At last, there's a digital hi-hat to accompany the digital snare and ride.

The VH-14D is an inch bigger than the analogue hi-hat it replaces, but also boasts a thinner profile, greatly improved sensitivity and positional sensing to detect if you're playing the left- or right-hand side of the cymbal.

Like the CY-18D, it also features the touch mute, as opposed to the 'traditional' edge pinch.

The long-awaited hi-hat is one of a number of new products just announced. Among them is a new TD-50X module already optimised for the digital hi-hat. But owners of the old TD-50 (and the TD-27, for that matter) won't miss out as there will be software updates that unleash the new digital capability.

The updates will also deliver the new sounds and new editing functions found in the X module.

But wait, there's more ...

When Roland launched the VAD line of acoustic-shelled e-drums, many questioned why it was powered by the mid-range TD-27 module rather than the flagship TD-50. Clearly, there was an economic motivation behind that decision – saving a few bucks to bring down the overall cost of the kits. But it's evident from the strong sales that price was not a big deal, so Roland has now paired acoustic shells with TD-50X brains in the new flagship VAD-706.

Not only does the new top-of-the-line kit get the top module, it also gets a shell makeover, now boasting maple veneer on eight-ply shells and a painted finish – as opposed to the wrapped six-ply poplar shells of the lower-range shells.

And, as many requested when VAD made its debut, there's not just one finish. In fact, buyers can choose from clear or three colours – black, red and blue.

digitalDrummer will include a review of the new kit and the module updates in a future edition, but on paper, it looks like the world's biggest e-drum company has ticked all the boxes with the new products.



TD-50X module

The TD-50X module features over 900 sounds, including many new kick, snare, hi-hat, tom, and cymbal selections.

Importantly, the TD-50X is configured for Roland's latest generation of digital triggers: PD-140DS snare, CY-18DR ride and new VH-14D hi-hat.

The TD-50X is the first V-Drums product to be supported through Roland Cloud, where drummers can find an expanding collection of premium V-Drums kits and curated samples for studio production and live playing, with membership providing access to existing content and new releases as they arrive.

For owners of the original TD-50 module, Roland Cloud will offer a paid upgrade that adds all the new capabilities of the TD-50X, including sounds that have been fully optimised for the VH-14D digital hi-hat.

A free system update will be available for standard TD-50 and TD-27 modules that adds support for the VH-14D and its enhanced detection capabilities, but no new sounds will be included.



VH-14D hi-hat

High-resolution sound triggering designed for use with the TD-50X and TD-27 modules with digital trigger inputs.

Top and bottom 14" pads with thin profiles for authentic feel and playability.

Precision tracking of velocity, stick and foot pedal position.

Wide-range touch sensors allow you to mute the cymbals with your hand.

Mounts to a regular acoustic hi-hat stand.



Recommended pricing*:

VAD706: \$7,999.99

TD-50K2: \$5,399.99

TD-50KV2: \$7,499.99

TD-50X: \$2,399.99

VH-14D hi-hat: \$899.99

** in the United States*

VAD706 kit

Powered by the TD-50X module, the kit includes Roland's digital triggers (PD-140DS snare, CY-18DR ride and VH-14D hi-hat), PDA100 10" tom, PDA120 12" tom and PDA140F 14" tom, together with the KD-222 22" kick and two CY-16R-T crashes.

The full-size wood shells are available in a choice of four finishes: Gloss Natural, Gloss Cherry, Gloss Ebony and Pearl White.



TD50X-KV2

Powered by the TD-50X module, the kit includes Roland's digital triggers (PD-140DS snare, CY-18DR ride and VH-14D hi-hat), together with two PD-108-BC 10" toms and two PD-128-BC 12" toms, a KD-180 18" kick and two CY-16R-T 16" crashes on an MDS-STG2 rack.

ATV appoints US distributor

ATV CORPORATION HAS entered into an agreement with Edrumcenter to be an exclusive distributor in the United States. Under the terms of the agreement, the online e-drum retailer will distribute ATV's aDrums artist and EXS series product lines throughout the USA.

As reported in **digitalDrummer** (Nov, 2020), ATV halted sales in the US and Australia after the collapse of its independent sales partners in those markets.

Based in Knoxville, Tennessee, Edrumcenter was founded in 2016 by industry veteran Erik Hamm as a specialist electronic drums retailer.

ATV president Tatsuro Shibuya says his team is delighted to be working with the Edrumcenter team. "Together, we are looking forward to bringing ATV products back to the US and, given Edrumcenter's long experience and superb reputation as a specialist in electronic drums, we really couldn't ask for a better partner."

It appears that Edrumcenter will be the sole source of ATV products in the United States, with no plans to get the brand into major chains like Sweetwater and Sam Ash.

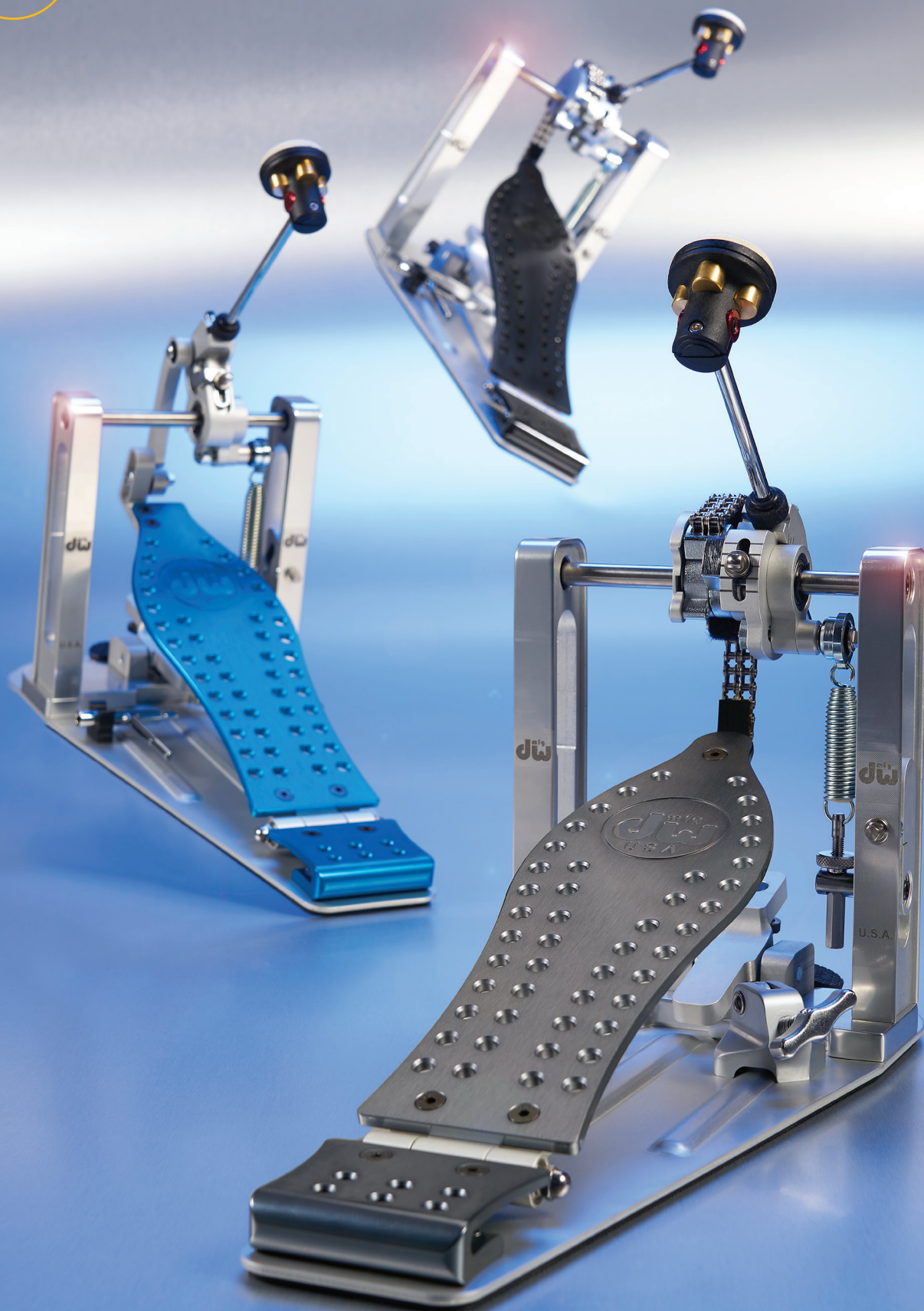
The two parties will make an announcement about warranty services



Erik Hamm at ATV's NAMM stand

and customer support arrangements "in due course", says Shibuya. US warranty claims are currently being handled by ATV's head office in Japan.

There is no word yet on a distributor for Australia.



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performance

Electronics power show



digitalDrummer spoke to the producer of a new all-female drumming show powered by e-drums.

ELECTRONIC PERCUSSION IS playing a key role in a new theatrical presentation which made its world debut in Melbourne, Australia in April.

Drummer Queens is the creation of Australian drummer Joe Accaria and features eight multifaceted female musicians.

The idea began in 2014, when Accaria was asked to put together a large drumming ensemble for Ricky Martin's performance at a football event. Half the group was female and the seed was sown for an all-girl show.

Accaria stayed in touch with some of the drummers and put together regular sessions. "From that, a few compositions emerged and we got a few corporate gigs and I started working on a full-blown show featuring not just Brazilian and African drumming, but elements of drumline and other genres," he says.

Electronics formed the backbone of the show from its outset, after Roland Australia drum guru Simon Ayton

introduced Accaria to the now-discontinued Roland marching drum.

"I started working with Joe on the technical aspects back in 2012/13," Ayton tells **digitalDrummer**.

"The first challenge was to make the show portable, so a power system had to be designed for each instrument that was powerful, safe, reliable and easy to charge after the show. We tested wireless triggering and sound and even made some trigger drum sticks to try out."

As the show evolved, so too did the e-percussion arsenal which now includes Roland's SPD-SX, HPD-20, VAD-506 V-Drums, TM-2, RT-30 series triggers and a range of trigger pads from the PD-8 to the PD-120.

The new TAIKO-1, which is a huge-sounding, wireless and portable taiko drum created for the Tokyo Olympic Games, is also scheduled to be included.

Accaria says a couple of VAD-506 kits form the "orchestra of the show", playing



The Drummer Queens cast in action

the underscore for the show, while the more mobile elements are played on portable percussion instruments.

“Electronic elements ebb and flow throughout the show as the acoustic and electronic elements blend together,” he explains.

The show features elaborate choreography and energetic playing, so a lot of effort has gone into setting up the hardware and programming the modules to avoid double-triggering and misfiring. At the same time, significant planning has gone into the triggering of acoustic instruments to ensure durability.

Ayton stresses the benefits of having expert involvement from the early stages of shows like Drummer Queens. “I think it’s important not to let the thought of the possible technical challenges overwhelm and stop the project before it’s even begun. There’s a work-around or solution for most creative ideas, and many have been done and there’s a product already available, so it’s worth asking the question - no matter how weird - especially when it comes to working with electronic music and instruments,” he advises.

He cites artists like Kraftwerk, Thomas Dolby, Peter Gabriel and Laurie Anderson who paved the way for theatrical use of technology decades ago in their live shows, “so there’s a ton of tried and tested tools and methods that work great for performing musicians”.

Durability is a key consideration for Accaria, who says the show has plenty of spares and redundancy built in.

The show also has a dedicated drum tech who is responsible for all the gear.

“There’s also a lot of wireless technology and a lot of RF

activity, so it’s important to set up the frequencies very carefully,” he adds.

One area which didn’t present any issues was the switch from electronic to acoustic instruments. Accaria says all the cast are multifaceted performers with a broad brushstroke of experiences.

This observation is shared by Ayton: “All the drummers involved are top players and performers in their own right, so adapting to playing electronic drums took no time for them. In the first rehearsal, they were already switching patches, choosing sounds and experimenting with the instruments in a totally organic way which was exciting to experience for us all.”

So far, the producer has announced a nine-city Australian tour, running until September.

And, down the track, there may even be some international touring. “There’s a very international language about Drummer Queens. A lot of the music is cross-pollinated, from Brazilian rhythms to modern hip-hop and rap, taiko and even classical music. So, I’d love to take it to the world. Who knows?”





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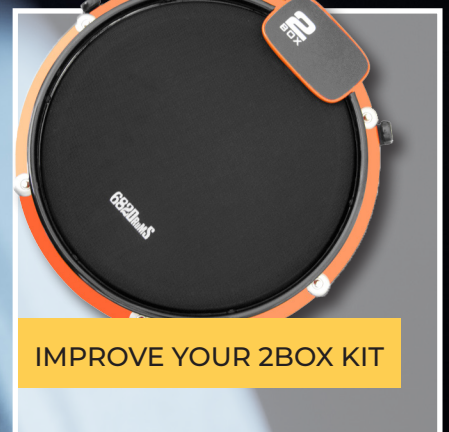
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Simmons amps it up

Scott Holder looks at the latest additions to the Simmons monitor range.

SIMMONS HAS RELEASED three new e-drum amps aimed at replacing its current line of cabinets. The DA2100 Series are like the DA2012B cabinet previously reviewed (dD November 2019) in general design and function, but with power ratings. We'll see how they stack up against my other two Simmons cabinets and the recent releases by Roland (PM-100/200, dD May 2018) and Yamaha (MS45DR, dD February 2020)

What's in the boxes

The DA2108/2110/2112 all share similar functionality and controls. All the sound shaping, pairing and $\frac{1}{8}$ " input connections are on the front, while the input/output connections and mono/stereo switching controls (and on/off) are on the back.

The common front controls are a floor/pole orientation switch (Simmons calls this a "voicing" switch), Bluetooth pairing, a $\frac{1}{4}$ " aux input and a $\frac{1}{8}$ " headphone output. The common rear inputs are an L (mono) and R (the number of pairs differ by model), a routing switch that allows for mono use or stereo pairing (with one unit as the master) and three XLR connections, an output/input pair for the stereo pairing function and a Direct Out typically for a sub-woofer. The big 2112 has one extra front control that allows you to direct the third input's signal to all the outputs, just to the headphones or to the L/R outputs (so isn't going to the Direct Out). This is useful if you want to monitor a separate click or guide track without everybody hearing it.

Each unit has a power switch in the rear that allows both 110/120 v and 220/240 v power sourcing. Simmons is clearly taking aim at the international market as well as the USA.

Unlike on the DA2012B, there is no internal limiter. Each does have a red LED to show clipping.

Each unit differs in the number of input and EQ controls. The 2108 has gain control for the single L/R input and Aux input. It has a Low and High EQ control (see our chart at the end for all the specs). The 2110 has gain control for two L/R input pairs and the Aux input and has three EQ controls - low/mid/high. The 2112 has gain control for three L/R pairings and the Aux input and has four EQ controls: low/low-mid/high-mid/high.

Each cabinet contains a main speaker, differing in size (8"/10"/12") depending on model, and a compression driver; the 2108/2110 share the same driver, while the

one in the 2112 is larger. The cabinets are mono but like the 2012B, can be configured in stereo mode with one speaker as a master and then connected to its pair via an XLR cable.

Bluetooth connectivity was easy. Press a button on the speaker to "advertise", then go to your source device and pair. You cannot "pair" a pair of speakers via Bluetooth; thus, you don't have full wireless, stereo capability. Instead, you set one cabinet as a master, the other "link in" via the switch in the back, connect them via an XLR cable, then pair the source with the master speaker. Full stereo sound results.

The performance

First thing I always gauge is "quiet at rest". Everything we've reviewed over the years shares this characteristic to varying degrees. My baseline for "noise" are my old little Crate amps; they are poster children for "noisy at rest" amps. Anything is quieter. The 2100 series are better than either the recent 2012B or the older DA200S. I plugged all in, set them up next to each other and cranked various gain controls until each produced a hiss. Each of the 2100 series had more headroom than the other two Simmons amps before I'd get a whisper of background hiss.

The second test is separation. The mono cabinets are like the Roland PM100/200 we reviewed (dD May 2018) and the Simmons 2012B; I do this to determine how the system will handle mids and highs. The baseline cabinet for a direct comparison is the Simmons DA200S, which remains to this day one of the nicest-sounding speakers I've heard. I also compare from memory and previous writings how the mids/highs sound in relation to the Yamaha MS45DR.

I play the Mobile Fidelity Sound Labs CD of Pink Floyd's *Money* via the $\frac{1}{8}$ " stereo input as it's mixed in such a way as to highlight the right/left bouncing, particularly for the intro. Not surprisingly in mono cabinets, the separation is like the 2012B and the Rolands: you can hear the distinct tonal bands but there's no bounce the way you hear on either the Simmons DA200S (dD May 2013), DA350 (dD Aug 2017) or Yamaha's 2in1 rig.

The mids/highs sounds and projection differed from cabinet to cabinet and that's due to the number of EQ controls. Using the three speakers as standalone monitors (as opposed to hooking them up as stereo pairs), the 2108 had the least clarity, the 2110 was a bit better



and the 2112 the best of all because of the EQ controls. As I found on the older 2012B, however, orientation makes a noticeable difference. Orienting the 2108/2110 vertically and making the corresponding switch change, the mids and highs became clearer, more distinct but still not as nice as the Yamaha MS45DR or the DA200S. Because of the four EQ controls on the 2112, I didn't notice as much difference going from horizontal to vertical but then I'd already had it "dialed in" as a wedge monitor.

Any issues on that overall balance between bass and the high/mid sound and separation disappeared when hooking up the 2108s as a matched, stereo pair. The audio was clear and balanced with the bass response. I'm a somewhat picky listener, and I can hear differences in the overall balanced tonal qualities among the three cabinets; again, because I can dial the 2112 close to where I think it should be while the other two have less refinement.

Third test is low end. I knew the 2112 would be comparable to the 2012B and Allan and I both

noted in our reviews its wall-shaking bass response. Not surprisingly, it was powerful and punchy, with plenty of headroom on all for EQ channels and the main. What was surprising was how well the 2110 did as a standalone. It obviously wasn't competing with the 2112, but it was just as good as the DA350 and the Roland PM-200. However, the real surprise was how well the 2108s sounded as a pair. The bass wasn't shaking the plaster off the walls, but in a 10' x 10' room, I had plenty of bass. Admittedly, the low range on the EQ was maxed to achieve that but I was making it a point of sitting at the other end of the room when evaluating the bass projection. Getting closer the way one would typically in a kit setting with speakers probably four to five feet away on either side, there was more than enough bass.

All three cabinets have the punchy lows without muddying the mids/highs, especially on the 2110/2112. Gone is the Boost function on the 2012B, it's not needed now that there are four EQ controls. Simmons has also done something with the sound projection in that there's an inherent reverb that I only heard on



the 2012B when using the “Boost” function. It’s not as pronounced on the 2100 series and whether you miss that will depend on your ears. I couldn’t get that total loudness sound on the 2108/2110 but could dial the 2112 to sound like the 2012B with the “Boost” (loudness) function on. And unlike my experience with the 2012B where I still needed to use my little Crate mixer to get the sound brighter, I could do that using the top two EQ bands on the 2112. The 2108/2110 were bright enough and required just a little tweaking.

I repeated the above tests with my Yamaha DTX502 module playing built-in songs and my Alesis Performance Pad Pro playing drum loops. When done, I performed side-by-side tests with my DA200S: channel separation isn’t as pronounced (when any of the 2100 series cabinets is used as a single box), sound clarity is very good and all three have significant low end. In that regard, they are identical to the 2012B. However, the 2100 series are “brighter”-sounding than the 2012B in comparison to the DA200S while retaining that bass punch. While I still love the overall sound quality of the DA200S, it’s a small sacrifice of optimised audio to get amps with punch; there really is no comparison.

All three handled songs from the DTX502 well, particularly the 2112. That’s not a surprise - a pair of these could easily function as a full band PA. A pair of the 2108/2110 would also

function nicely in a rehearsal role assuming you’re not trying to project bass or a balanced sound too far.

Everybody ultimately judges e-drum amps by the bass response. I’ll repeat myself: you want to feel thump in your drums and just as importantly, you want everybody else to feel that thump. The 2100 Series does that well.

Conclusion

As we said in the 2012B review, the 2112 can fully function as one half of a band’s PA system. A lone 2112 would also easily work as a personal monitor on just about any stage; you would never be in any danger of losing your bass response or hearing another instrument like keyboards.

The 2108/2110 are the same in terms of power output, thus, what you project won’t differ much. However, the slightly larger main speaker (10” vs 8”) suggests the bass will carry more. That speaker size and the additional EQ knob (for mids) allows for a slightly more tailored sound.

How does this line compare to the Yamaha and Roland cabinets we’ve reviewed since 2018 – particularly on a one-to-one basis (meaning not a stereo pair vs a lone cabinet)? The Yamaha, as mentioned, has gorgeous mids/highs but no bass. The Simmons and Rolands match up well in terms of bass response and, obviously, the larger the Simmons cabinet, the more bass



you get and you have far more EQ ability, a complaint both Allan and I had with the Rolands. Both Roland units have a better/nicer overall soundscape to them but that's also a somewhat subjective, relative assessment.

That being said, I feel that a pair of 2108s is of great value if you want personal monitoring that's stereo, has plenty of bass punch and a good overall sound for playback or play-along material. For years when I've wanted something other than headphones when banging on the pads in the basement, I've always used my DA200S. That's gonna change.

Specifications

Output:

2108: 100w (400w peak)

2110: 100w (400w peak)

2112: 350w (2000w peak; same as DA2012B)

EQ:

2108: Bass (+/- 12dB, 75Hz); Treble (+/- 12dB, 10kHz)

2110: Bass (+/- 12dBf, 75Hz); Midrange (+/- 12dB, 1kHz); Treble (+/- 12dB, 10kHz)

2112: Bass (+/- 12dBf, 65Hz); Low Mids (+/- 12dB, 350Hz); High Mids (+/- 12dB, 2.5kHz); Treble (+/- 12dB, 10kHz)

Frequency Response:

2108: 65Hz - 20kHz

2110: 55Hz - 20kHz

2112: 40Hz - 20kHz

Speakers:

2108: 8" (203mm) woofer; 1" (25mm)

Compression driver

2110: 10" (254mm) woofer; 1" (25mm)

Compression driver

2112: 12" (300mm) woofer; 1.35" (34mm)

Compression driver

Max Sound Pressure Level @ 1 m:

2108: 118dB

2110: 120dB

2112: 126dB

Inputs: All models one stereo 1/8"; one Bluetooth; one XLR (for stereo pairing)

2108: One L/R 1/4" mono pair

2110: Two L/R 1/4" mono pair

2112: Three L/R 1/4" mono pair

Outputs: All models one stereo 1/8"; one XLR (Direct Out), one XLR (for stereo pairing)

Dimensions:

2108: 17.25" (W) x 10.25" (H) x 10.1" (D) (438mm x 260mm x 256mm)

2110: 20" x 11.8" x 11.45" (508mm x 299mm x 290mm)

2112: 24.1" x 14.2" x 14.2" (612mm x 361mm x 361mm)

Weight:

2108: 15.5 lb/7 kg

2110: 20 lb/9 kg

2112: 38.5 lbs/17 kg

Street price:

2108: \$180

2110: tba

2112: \$330

A second pair of ears

In 2019, we pronounced the Simmons DA2012B a game-changer, primarily because of its nominal power rating of 2,000 watts.

Our reviews at the time noted the pure grunt of the amp compared to its competitors.

We also welcomed the multiple inputs – five at once, which ran without the muddiness you sometimes get from mixed inputs – although there was no stereo separation.

And my other criticism was a slight lack of finesse, at least compared to the three-channel equalizer of the DA200S. The 2012 has Bass and Treble controls and a bass boost setting, which means little control over the mid-range.

I'm not sure if Simmons listened to our feedback, but the new range addresses the shortcomings we pointed out and delivers something we didn't even think of – different sizes and power ratings.

While the 'entry level' 2108 still has just two tone adjustments, the 2110 has three and the 2112 has four. And that really counts when you're pumping it out, especially in a closed room with lots of natural reverb where there's a risk of overpowering bass.

Although the cabinets are similar, there are two output options - 100 Watts RMS, 400W Peak for the two smaller units and 350 Watts RMS, 2000W for the flagship.

While Scott tested all three models, I got to use the 2112 – in a stereo pair – and it was not only enough for drum monitoring, but I was able to use it as a full PA for an outdoor gig for a loud three-piece rock band (vox and drums).

The difference is not just the wattage; it's also the bass projection – with drivers ranging from 8" to 12".

There's also a difference in the number of inputs in the three units – from three in the

base model (one stereo line, an aux and Bluetooth) to five at the top of the line.

As Scott pointed out, Bluetooth pairing was easy, but in the real world, interference from other devices certainly impacted on the performance and there were a few interruptions when I connected my phone during the breaks for background music.

For me, the big development with this range – and one which might escape the attention of US-based reviewers – is the switchable input voltage.

When I reviewed the DA200S, I initially used it with a step-down transformer before opening the cabinet and swapping the internal power supply – thereby voiding the warranty. I had to do that to avoid the hum of the transformer.

Simmons helped me out with the DA2012B review sample, getting the manufacturer to switch the power supply from the stock 110 v to 220 v at the factory.

Now, however, anyone can select between 110 v and 220 v, meaning that for the first time, Simmons has a drum amp for the global market. And even if there is no UK or European distributor, buyers can take advantage of international shipping from Guitar Center (Simmons' owner) to order one from the US. (If you get really lucky, you may even stumble across a free shipping code, as I did with the DA200S, as the shipping to Australia would normally have cost more than the amp itself!).

I've been a big fan of Simmons amps ever since that first one, and continue to be impressed with each new generation that offers increased grunt coupled with more refinement in what we could term Beauty and the Beast in a box.

But best of all, Simmons supplies the goodies at great prices, delivering power, control and value in each amp product.

-Allan Leibowitz



Ef-ing good



A 'new' Japanese brand is popping up on showroom floors, and **Allan Leibowitz** managed to get hold of an Efnote kit for review.

THE AVERAGE BUYER might not be aware of the background, but **digitalDrummer** readers will know that new Japanese e-drum maker Efnote is the result of a defection by key staff from ATV, which itself was a breakaway from Roland, led by Roland founder Ikutaro Kakehashi.

The similarities between the Efnote range and the ATV products are immediately obvious, but so too is the refinement and enhancement of the products. Some might say the Efnote is ATV 2.0. Regardless, it's certainly worth a closer look.

What's in the box

digitalDrummer tested the Efnote 5 kit, a compact eight-piece bop kit with full-size wrapped birch shells and classy-looking, generously sized cymbal pads.

The kit consists of a 16 x 12" kick drum, a 12 x 5" three-zone mesh snare, a 10 x 7" hanging tom and a 12 x 12" floor tom. Unlike the ATV Artist range, the toms are dual-zone.

The cymbal array includes a 14" three-zone, two-piece optical hi-hat, an 18" three-zone ride, a 16" three-zone crash and an 8" splash which is easy to overlook and throw out with the packaging!

Supplied hardware includes a quality hi-hat stand, two cymbal stands, a snare stand, a tom mount and mounts for the splash and module. My review kit also included a decent single kick pedal and an entry-level throne.

The components were exceptionally well packed in three boxes.

Setting up

There's no rack, so set-up is pretty much like a standard acoustic kit. The major difference, of course, is that the components are all wired to the module. As has become custom, the cabling is connected via a standard cable snake (two actually!). The cabling is optimised for module placement on the left and for right-hand players. There's no spare cable and very little slack in the wiring, so

components need to be set up in their traditional position – something which will annoy left-handed players or those who fancy exotic layouts. While I prefer the module on the right, I'm getting used to left-hand placements, so it worked fine.

In setting up the kit, I was struck by the quality of the drums which are weighty, beautifully wrapped in silver sparkle and finished with quality hardware.

In action

On paper, the advantage of a kit over individual components is that all the elements are designed to work together and the module preconfigured for the drums and cymbals. In the case of the Efnote 5, this was certainly true. This was as close to plug and play as I have seen in all my reviewing. The settings required little to no tweaking – which was a good thing because the module was very hard to read with my ageing eyes.

Let's start with the module: when I reviewed the aD5, I was struck by its elegant, compact design. Well, the Efnote designers have gone a step further – shrinking the box down more, packing





A classy finish on the cymbals and the multi-sensor trigger system



much more into it and adding a 7 x 7 cm touchscreen. Unfortunately, I suspect no-one on the design team is over 40 years old because the fonts they selected are tiny and hard to read. In some menus, the kit name takes up almost half the screen and the 'controls' are crammed into the lower part of the screen, often hard to read and to tap if you don't have 'geisha' fingers.

That said, the user interface is intuitive and logical and it's very easy to navigate the various control screens and menus.

Many of the functions missing from the aD5 have made it into the EFD-5 module. For a start, there is rim triggering on the toms.

The module also features Bluetooth audio and MIDI, MIDI via USB (although the mini USB slot on the side is easily overlooked!) and MIDI out via five-pin DIN jack.

Like many mid-range modules, direct audio output is limited to a single stereo output, but audio can also be routed to the headphone jack, giving you four separate channels. Alternatively, up to eight audio channels can be sent via USB.

The module comes loaded with 17 kits (with names that didn't mean much to me!), with sounds drawn from around 100 instruments.

There is an easy-to-use onboard recording system which captures the sounds in terrific detail and a couple of training tools.

While the drums are on the smaller end of the new generation of acoustic-style kits,

they are certainly big enough for comfortable playing. It's also easy to position them ergonomically.

As mentioned, the drums are dual-zone and the rims are covered with elegant grey rubber silencer rings which limit the acoustic noise but don't interfere with triggering. Like the ATV version, the snare has a separate triggered rim riser which is particularly useful for rim clicks with your stick held to the head.

The cymbals are simply gorgeous for rubber pies – they are full-sized and shaped very much like their ATV cousins, but covered in the signature grey rubber which has an embossed logo band towards the bow. They have 360 degree triggering and choke functions and feel great under the sticks.

The optical hi-hat is more refined than the ATV model on which it was based: it connects via a single five-pin jack and doesn't require a separate power source. And it performs beautifully!

The performance

As I said, the kit is virtually plug and play. I tweaked a few curves (very easy to do in the trigger setting) and calibrated the hi-hat – and that was all that was needed to ensure fantastic triggering all round.

The drums had a huge dynamic range, from ghost notes to full-bore in-your-face fortissimo. There's no positional sensing, but there are no hot spots either because the drums have three sensors towards the rims.



It's not clear how many velocity levels and how many sample layers are used, but there was absolutely no evidence of machinegunning – no matter how hard I tried to hit with the same force. And the rims are equally responsive no matter where you hit them – close to you or on the opposite side of the hoop.

Even the bass drum, the easiest shell to trigger but one of the hardest to provide a natural feel, delivered in spades. Whether it was light hits or burying the beater, you got what you expected.

The cymbals were a delight to play – beautifully responsive bows, a bell that doesn't need the wrist force of an arm wrestler and edges that produced fantastic swells – from soft to loud. And they felt wonderful under the stick as well.

Choking required the lightest of pinches anywhere on the edge.

The hi-hat had an excellent open/closed action and again felt natural and responsive.

If the aim was to produce a kit that played like an acoustic drum set, Efnote can tick that box.

One description which kept coming to mind as I played was “articulate”. The kit was

incredibly responsive – feeling and sounding more like an acoustic drum set than pretty much anything out there. The cymbals, in particular, were amazingly realistic – from the lightest touch of the ride bell to exuberant swells on the edge – and even the tiny splash performed well.

If you're a VST guy (or girl), the Efnote 5 was easy to connect via MIDI to Macbook Pro (using a firewire interface) and performed well with a variety of programs. I used the ATV map where available. The hi-hat took some dialling in with Superior Drummer and Addictive Drums, but otherwise most of the instruments lined up using the GM map.

The sounds

The aD5 launched with just five kits, so the 17 stock sets on the EFD-5 is quite generous for this style of module.

The emphasis is on natural-sounding acoustic kits and the high-definition stereo samples come from a variety of 'big name' drums from Ludwig, Yamaha, Pearl and Gretsch, with some exotic snares from Noble & Cooley and C&C. The sampled toms range from 10" to 16".

You won't, however, find any brushes, mallets or rods among the samples.

The cymbals, meanwhile, are recognisable Zildjian, Sabian and Meinl standards.

The module also has a smattering of percussion sounds.

I was surprised at the limited number of “raw” sounds in the kit, but if you consider that all the samples can be slightly tweaked (pitch and sustain), you do have a lot of sounds to work with. You can also layer sounds, to add further colour and diversity.

So, what this tells us is that the Efnote 5 is an acoustic kit substitute – built to look, feel and sound like “real” drums. The emphasis is on dry, clean sounds, and even when you deploy the built-in reverb (eight types which can be dialled in), you still end up with what sounds like an acoustic kit in a room.

As I flipped from kit to kit, the word “subtle” sprang to mind. Yes, there are differences, but it’s not John Bonham vs Billy Cobham. The stock kits are wonderfully realistic and would be fine for anyone doing pop, rock, gospel or soul covers – maybe even metal. But you would be hard-pressed to recreate Phil Collins’ *In The Air Tonight* sound or Ringo’s tea towel *Come Together* kit.

Obviously, there are no electronic sounds, Latin kits or disco sounds, so in its stock form, the Efnote 5 is not going to cover all the bases.

The bottom line

It’s great to have another option in the full-size, acoustic-style, real sample e-drum kit – even better when it’s the virtual evolution of something that already showed so much promise.

I’m sure Efnote would like to be seen as something new and fresh and would be keen to remove itself from the shadow of

ATV, but it’s hard not to see the resemblance – and that’s not a bad thing. Even better, Efnote delivers on the promise shown by its precursor and addresses many of its shortcomings.

It adds trigger zones not available on ATV: tick

It has Bluetooth connectivity: tick

It has onboard recording and training tools: tick

It offers more stock sounds and kits than ATV: tick

It has an established US distributor: big tick

In short, this is an excellent electronic drum kit that plays like a dream – although the review kit was a bit small for my liking and I would probably prefer the 5X with the extra floor tom and crash! I would also have liked bigger playing areas on the snare and floor tom, although I must admit that I didn’t accidentally hit any rims, even once!

The Efnote 5 is pitched at the discerning amateur drummer and most will find this an enjoyable instrument which allows them to





explore their drumming creativity quietly at home or even on stage if they play the odd gig.

Many of our readers have more specific needs and the big question we anticipate from a number of them is “what about additional samples?” The clear answer from Efnote is “no!”.

The developers are emphatic that the module has no instrument import capability. “We have no intention to release any sample editor or add a one-shot sample import function,” a spokesman tells **digitalDrummer**, noting that unlike “some competitors” (which is code for ATV), the module has editing parameters such as pitch, muffling, EQ and layer. The assumption is that users should be able to tweak the sounds they want from the existing samples and editing functions.

My fear is that some buyers will soon run out of options, especially if they’re chasing “that sound”. The supplied sonic selection is excellent and natural, but it is limited, and the fact that no additional sounds are being flagged and that the onboard editing is far more limited than, for example, the Roland TD-17, are significant impediments, especially to gigging e-drummers.

It needs to be noted that Efnote is quite secretive about what’s under the hood. The company won’t reveal the amount of onboard storage, or the number of samples or velocity levels used or even the polyphony.

When pressed, we were told: “We have no intention to disclose this information ... because we believe this information

doesn’t represent the sound quality, playability, nor product capability.”

To some extent, the playing experience and the sounds tell a good story, but it’s curious that the company withholds information which is proudly displayed by competitors.

The bottom line: this kit will make many drummers, especially acoustic converts, very, very happy.

Specifications

Sound module: EFD-5

Display: 7 x 7 cm touchscreen

Drum kits: 17 preset, 83 user

Instruments: 128 sounds and attack elements

Edit parameters: Level, pan, tuning, muffling (for each pad), 2-band EQ, reverb (8 Types), pad layer

Trigger inputs: 2 x multicables

Line out: 2 x ¼” mono

Headphones: ⅛” stereo

Aux In: ⅛” stereo

USB Audio: 8-ch output/2-ch input

USB MIDI In/Out

MIDI out: 5-pin DIN

Bluetooth: Audio/MIDI

Training tools: Multi-function metronome with beat LED indicator, Stroke Analyzer, Rhythm Box

Recording: direct on-board recording function (15 songs)

Latency: 3.5 ms

Kit components

Kick: EFD-K1612 (16 x 12")

Snare: EFD-S1250 (12 x 5"), three-zone

Toms: EFD-T1070 (10 x 7") and EFD-T1212 (12 x 12"), dual-zone

Hi-hat: EFD-H14, two-piece optical three-zone

Crash: EFD-C16, three-zone, 360° flat sensing + choke

Ride: EFD-C18, three-zone, 360° flat sensing + choke

Splash: EFD-C08, two-zone, 360° flat sensing + choke

Street price: \$2,500



drum-tec has an excellent demo available here.

This pad's OK(to)



Allan Leibowitz tested an Octapad look-alike to see if it's also a sound-alike.

MULTIPADS ARE COMING of age, with the range growing rapidly, especially at entry-level.

In line with the recent low-cost SPD-X knock-offs, including the nPad/Avatar PD705/Gear4Music DD90, Carlsbro has released an Octapad clone which I am surprised is not the subject of a legal action – if not for its similar name, Okto A, then for its striking design similarity to the SPD-30.

What's in the box

The Okto A is an eight-pad drum multipad and kit substitute with 408 drum voices, 30 preset drum kits and 20 user drum kits. It ships with proprietary hi-hat controller and kick pedals wired together and connected via a single TRS jack.

The box also contains a pair of Carlsbro-branded sticks – something of an indicator of a beginner product.

The eight pads are almost identical in size to the nPad/Avatar line at 9 x 10 cm, although the rubber is much thicker and slightly more bouncy.

The Okto A can be expanded, with inputs for an additional ride, snare and kick as well as a pair of inputs for an external hi-hat and controller.

The rear panel also includes a full-size stereo audio out, a mix-in jack, a 1/8" headphone jack and a USB connection.

There's a 6 x 5 cm LCD screen and an array of dials and knobs on the right-hand side to control most of the functions easily and logically, without having to dig too deeply into menus.

You can buy an optional stand, but the pad can be mounted using a regular module mounting plate. There's also an optional carry bag – which is a nice touch not available with other lower-cost multipads, including the Alesis Strike Multipad.

Setting up

The multipad is pretty much plug and play. Plug in the pedals, connect the power cable, switch it on, select a kit and start playing – with the free included sticks.

Each pad is editable for triggering, with users able to adjust sensitivity, threshold, mask time, crosstalk and retrigger “cancel” as well as choosing from one of six response curves.

The kit menu allows you to switch between the kit presets and choose from one of the 30 stock kits which span everything from pop to world and orchestral sounds – including two rather unconvincing brushes sets. Kit modification options are limited to reverb (six options) and EQ (high or low). And if you make any changes, these are saved to a User kit.

Individual pad sounds are also editable. You can select a voice from the 400-odd samples, modify the reverb and shift the pitch up or down. Again, the changes are saved to a User kit when you hit “save”. Like Alesis, KAT and some other brands, if you don't hit save, the changes won't stick.

The manual specifies which pads can be connected to the external pad inputs and, of course, they are all from the Carlsbro range.

Not having access to any of those pads – a situation which will no doubt confront most buyers, I tried some pads from my collection and found the kick input was virtually plug and play with anything that was connected. I got decent dual-zone triggering on the snare input from a range of piezo/piezo mesh drums and found much more dynamic range and sound variability than with the inbuilt rubber strike zones. On the ride input, I got bow and edge triggering from various cymbal pads, but not necessarily in the correct configuration (often getting edge sounds from bow and vice versa). Hi-hat triggering was good, but I couldn't get the pad to work using Roland, Yamaha and ATV controllers.

There is no trigger-type selection when setting up external pads, so it's very much the luck of the draw if your non-Carlsbro drum or cymbal pad will work – but when they did work, they needed very little tweaking.

A nice touch on the Okto A that I haven't seen anywhere else is the ability to switch

the pad configuration from standard right-hand to left-hand set-up at the flick of a switch.

Besides being triggered by hitting pads, the Okto A also acts as a MIDI synth – interestingly via USB rather than conventional five-pin DIN connector. I was able to easily trigger VSTs via USB MIDI, but couldn't trigger the Okto A from my laptop. I was also not able to connect via Bluetooth, although the menu indicates that both audio and MIDI can send wirelessly. There seemed to be no way to pair the mutipad with external devices – but maybe that will be fixed in a firmware update.

In action

As mentioned, the Okto A is virtually ready to play out of the box. The default settings seem to be appropriate for the average player, and it's possible to get decent dynamics and responsiveness from the pads in stock settings.

If these settings don't do it for you, it's very easy to adjust the responsiveness, and all changes are saved automatically.

The pads are slightly more bouncy than almost anything else in this genre – but not unpleasantly so. The dynamic range, when you've got the setting dialled in, is pretty good and the pads seem well isolated from each other, with not a hint of crosstalk.

The pedals, on the other hand, are less responsive, and I found the bass pedal virtually unplayable. The stock hi-hat pedal, on the other hand, was more than adequate for the open/closed/foot splash functionality.

A good feature, especially if you're able to connect an external kick trigger, is the ability to allocate x-stick sounds to the kick pad universally with a single switch. This means all the kits automatically get head and rim sounds for the snare, using the bass pad for the rim.

Kit changes were lightning-fast, but when you're only switching one-layer samples, that's not surprising.

The Okto A has a limited built-in record function. Why limited? That's because, like the Avatar multipad, the device uses MIDI for recording. Even though you can set a

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metronome for the recording, there's no count in, so the capture starts as soon as you hit record. And it's not editable. Yes, you can set the tempo and record with or without a click, but you really have to hit the ground running with no way of editing out any silence at the start. And, sadly, the recordings are not saved permanently and each time you do another recording, you lose the previous one. So, there's no way you can build loops in multiple takes, as you can with more advanced instruments. On the positive side, because the recording is MIDI and not audio, you can change the kit sounds after recording so if you decide on an electronic kit after recording the loop with a rock kit, it's easily done.

Another nice feature is the LEDs which light up when each pad is struck.

As a drum module, the response of the Okto A is quite quick, with latency of 9.7 ms – far better than Avatar's 13.9 ms and pretty close to the Alesis Strike Multipad's 6.4 ms.

The Okto A is being marketed as a teaching tool and it boasts some nifty onboard coaching applications which allow students to practice rhythms, beats and patterns – at different tempos and degrees of difficulty.

Sounds like

Obviously, with electronic percussion products at the lower end of the market, you're not going to get VST-quality sounds.

The Okto A has a good spread of sounds suited to a range of genres and the samples are decent enough. But played with the pads, they are one-dimensional, and the only variety is volume. So, it's impossible to avoid machinegunning, especially on the snare and toms. Interestingly, when I connected an external snare, I seemed to be able to get much more variety in the sounds and could do a fairly passable roll.

While they can be used as full-blown kits, products like this are mostly used for sonic enhancement these days, offering drummers sounds they may not be able to achieve with their regular acoustic or electronic kit – and on that score, the Okto A probably does provide some usable additions. There are some decent electronic samples where the lack of sample layers is not really an issue. Similarly, a number of the ethnic sounds, from congas to tree chimes and shakers, sound decent enough.



Bottom line

Maybe the reason Roland has not acted against this new entrant is that anyone listening to the two side by side won't be at all confused by the apparent similarities.

The Okto A is a useful instrument built for a pricepoint. It triggers well and has reasonable sounds. It can also be expanded into a mini drum kit by adding an external snare, kick, ride and hi-hat (with some caveats). And, for novices, it has some useful learning tools built in.

But the recording function is so limited as to be useless in the performing world.

There's also no ability to import new sounds, so what you hear is pretty much what you get.

Comparisons with the other entry-level offerings is inevitable, especially as both are around the same price levels – the Carlsbro selling for around £229 in the UK (it is not available globally, but will no doubt later appear under other brand names), while the G4M multipad is slightly cheaper at £200.

While the G4M pad has nine trigger pads (three of them quite small) to the Okto's eight, the Carlsbro has more external trigger inputs – as well as a hi-hat controller and kick pad included in the package.

The form factors are very different – two rows of four pads vs two rows of three and a third row of smaller pads.

The Avatar/G4M multipads do have one advantage: the ability to import user samples and generous onboard memory to store them. But, their sample-adding software is far from intuitive and, anyway, adding samples is not a deal-breaker for a lot of people.

Where the Carlsbro wins hands-down is its array of knobs and dials and the far more friendly user interface. Many months after first encountering the Avatar multipad, I am often stumped by the menu system and struggle to make the simplest changes. The Okto, on the other hand, is very easy to use, thanks to its logical controls and menus.

Specifications

Pads: Eight

Kits: 30 Preset + 20 User

Voices: 408 drum sounds, 128 GM song voices

Effects: 2-band EQ; 6 reverb settings

Audio sequencer: 1,000 notes (MIDI)

Connectors: 1/8" stereo headphone out, 1/8" stereo Mix In

Audio connector: 1/4" stereo out, USB MIDI

Pedals: 1/4" kick/HH controller

Extensions: hi-hat, ride, snare, kick, HH controller

Latency: 9.7 ms

Street price: £229 (A\$449)



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Dirk Brand

There's 'eclectic' and then there's Dirk Brand. Heavy metal one day, organ trio the next – Brand is a percussive chameleon, bringing his talent and experience to a range of musical projects.

IT ALL STARTED with traditional German marching bands which captured Dirk's imagination when he was two or three years old. Dirk's parents tried to keep up with his enthusiasm with a supply of toy drums which he proceeded to destroy, forcing his dad to buy him a real drum before kindergarten.

When it became clear that drumming was not going to be a passing fad, Dirk's parents arranged for a Royal Air Force marching band drummer based in Germany, James Sargent, to start teaching their son at the tender age of six and a half, even though he normally didn't take students under 12.

"So, the first beat I learned on the drums was not a rock beat, but spang, spang-a-lang – a jazz beat," he recalls.

Sargent was an old-school teacher who insisted on music reading, rudiments and snare drum skills, but young Dirk just wanted to play the drum set, so he started teaching himself on the kit.

The combination of technique, reading and practice led to marching band and symphony band roles in his school years, and Dirk honed his tuned percussion

skills and his sight reading and mastered instruments like timpani. He even won a youth music competition on xylophone – but his secret was removing the plates he didn't need.

The rock music thread began at the age of 12, when Dirk joined his older brother's friends in a band that played covers like The Police.

As young Dirk became more serious about music, his parents feared for his career prospects and his father urged him "to learn a real skill". This led to a business degree, but Dirk continued his music studies and was offered a scholarship to The Percussion Institute of Technology in California to study with the legendary Joe Porcaro and Frank Zappa's Ralph Humphrey.

"So, I finished my business degree, and then I moved to the States - and I didn't tell my parents!" he says, not wanting to disappoint his dad.



One of Dirk's first drums and a lesson with James Sargent



That stint in the US played a pivotal role in Brand's drumming career. "I loved the States. I have really, really great memories, especially Porcaro and Humphrey and all the teachers.

"I worked my ass off and it was the experience of a lifetime, really doing music 24 hours a day."

That experience set Dirk up for a drumming career in Germany, starting with leading a drum school at Drums Only in Stuttgart with Jürgen Mader, the creator of the country's first drum clinics and drum festivals which would feature artists like Steve Gadd and Simon Phillips.

"Through him, I got into the music business scene," he says, explaining that his reputation grew as he became known as a good, versatile sight-reader and was asked to play for more national and international acts.

"I have never cared about the genre - it didn't matter if it was jazz, rock, pop or metal; I loved to play it all and I got a lot of jobs in many, many different genres."

Brand's career was also helped by his knowledge of electronic drums.

"I'm a kid of the '80s and I love bands like Kajagoogoo and Duran Duran, and I got my first electronic drum kit when I was 12. And it's not like today, when everyone is familiar with electronic drums. Back then, people said electronic drums are toys and they're not real drums. So, this was a real adventure and challenge for me to make them sound good in my own way!"

Brand's career centred around accompanying singers and playing jazz, but a couple of drum books, including a pioneering work on drum and bass, raised his profile further, pushing him up the ranks, where he developed a reputation as "the fill-in guy".

"When somebody was ill or couldn't play a gig, you could call Dirk Brand because he will somehow nail the gig," he recalls.

So it was that on a Thursday evening in 2008, Brand was playing in the jazz club in Münster, close to his hometown, when he got a call asking if he could sit in with a



Dirk produced several brushes videos for Roland and his ground-breaking drum 'n bass book

German band called Axxis in Wacken the next night.

“I didn’t know what Wacken was, because I was not a rock guy.

“So, I was playing in Münster. There were 150 people in the jazz club. The next day, I was playing (at one of the biggest heavy metal music festivals in Europe) in front of 80,000 people. And that was a scary experience for me. The drum set was so huge,” he says.

Did he nail the gig? Well, by 2012, Brand had become the band’s full-time drummer, so it’s fair to say he passed the audition.

Meanwhile, Dirk continued to develop his prog career with Subsignal, where he remains part of the line-up alongside Markus Steffen, Arno Menses, Ralf Schwager and Markus Maichel. And, returning to his jazz roots, he is also part of Gregor Hilden Organ Trio, a band which celebrates the Hammond organ.

All of this seems a far cry from the Brand who is well known to European and especially German e-drummers – the quintessential Roland demonstrator.

Brand recalls his early adoption of electronic drumming, saying he was combining his Simmons SDS5 with acoustics when he was a teenager.

“I even had a Tama Techstar and some Sonor electronic drums. I really liked to

collect and combine all those things.”

He combined all this knowledge in his second book, *Future Drumming*, and reached out to Karl Brandis from Roland Germany for pictures to illustrate the text. Brandis suspected that Brand was looking for an endorsement, but that wasn’t the case – he had already bought a TD-10 kit, inspired by the performances of Steve Fisher at MusikMesse in Frankfurt. What sealed the Roland kit for him was the ability to play an electronic kit with brushes – something that has become a minor obsession for him ever since.

As we hear so often in drumming, what goes around comes around and in 2001, Brandis, who remembered that Brand had included Roland in his book, offered him a job as a demonstrator at the German music trade show. “He said ‘it’s not a big job, but at least you can make some money because you were so kind putting those pictures in your book’.

“And then Roland noticed that I had a lot of knowledge about electronica and I could talk to the customers and show them the functions. And because I played so many different kinds of electronic drums, I could explain the pros and cons.”

Soon after, Brand was signed up as a Roland demonstrator and his first gig was the German demo tour for the TD-8.



“Normally, Roland sends a sales guy with the artist on these tours, but when they scheduled the first clinic, they forgot that all the sales guys would be at a meeting in Japan, so I had to do it on my own,” he recalls.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, Brand took it in his stride – and showed his new “employer” he could run the clinics on his own – and that became the norm for his demonstrations until his tenure ended a couple of years ago.

“Germany was a new market for electronic drums in the early 2000s, but I was lucky because I loved it: I loved to play, I love to talk to people, I love to exchange because every time when I got out, I learned something, too.”

Even though there was only limited interest in electronic drums, Brand’s reputation ensured the success of his Roland clinics, which would attract 50 to 60 people where previously there might have been 10.

Brand says touring was the highlight of his time with Roland: “Especially touring outside of Germany. China’s a great


country. I love Japan. I was in Russia. I was in England and I met so many great drummers. And everywhere I went, I met so many friendly people and I got a warm welcome!”

Brand sees that era as something of a golden age for drum demonstrations and laments that interest in the intimate demos has waned. “I remember when I was 17 or 18, Vinnie Colaiuta was doing a workshop in Stuttgart. And after school, we drove for five hours to watch the wizard, before driving back through the night in order to get back to school the next morning.

“Nowadays, if you ask your students to attend a workshop even 30 minutes away, they’ll complain that it’s raining, or they haven’t seen their girlfriend, or something.

“So, I think the workshop scene has changed a lot.”

What has also changed is the equipment Brand is demonstrating. After two decades with Roland, the drummer has moved to Pearl. He had switched to Pearl acoustics, and although he was offered a new role at Roland, he decided it was time to switch.

 *I still think an electronic drum looks cool.
I still like the hexagon pads from Simmons.
I like the look.*

“I had 22 years with Roland and I'm very thankful for those years. I made so many friends all over the place and I still have so many friends,” he says with no regrets.

Brand joined Pearl as the company really stepped up its electronic drum activity.

“They sent me the mimicPRO and the e/MERGE, which were both really interesting and totally different from Roland, so I thought this is a new challenge for me.”

(**digitalDrummer** saw Brand launch the e/MERGE at the UK Drum Show in Manchester in 2019 and his passion and commitment were evident – as was his love of speaking to the punters. It was hard to drag him away for a quick interview.)

Brand also heads up the list of Pearl artists who are providing a free one-hour one-on-one lesson with each buyer of an e/MERGE in Europe. The tutor line-up includes Miguel Lamas, Riccardo Merlini, Cedric Hilaire, Jason Bowld and Hai Hahto.

Brand admits he's a serial tinkerer and has thrown himself into optimising the e/MERGE. “I have to find my way to fit my playing and make my playing as smooth as it can be. And I am tweaking drums and finding ways to make it work best for me,” he says.

So, we go back to brushes. While Roland pioneered a triggering setting for brushes in the TD-10, Brand continued to push for performance realism – even writing a how-to guide for **digitalDrummer** on optimising the TD-30 module for brushes.

He's now taken that challenge over to the e/MERGE.

“Brushes, for me, is an art form. And I love all people who play brushes - I even had

some lessons in the States with the old jazz drummers like Joe La Barbara and took master classes with Jeff Hamilton. I wanted to find a way to make it work. It's a journey,” he says.

Brand has shared a video of his progress to date with the e/MERGE, but admits that he had to do a lot of trigger tweaking to get the level of response he wants. He hasn't yet convinced the programmers to offer his brushes settings as a trigger preset, but knowing Dirk, he'd be happy to share them directly with anyone who asked – just as he did with TD-30 brushes patches.

Brand recognises the mixed message in brushes on electronic drums. “Initially, I liked electronic drums because they sound different. But now every company, with no exception, is going for an acoustic look and acoustic sounds. I understand that people want to practise and want it to sound close to the classic song. But, for me, it would be more interesting to go more deeply into the sounds and that's why I like to tweak sounds.”

He's also not a huge fan of electronics mimicking the look of acoustics, one of the reasons he likes the e/MERGE design.

“I still think an electronic drum looks cool. I still like the hexagon pads from Simmons. I like the look,” he says.

While Brand is equally comfortable on acoustic or electronic drums, it is the prospect of what lies ahead that tips the balance in favour of digital drums. “When you look at acoustic drums, the evolution is almost done. But for electronics? Who knows what lies ahead - and this is why I love electronic drums. I think there are many things to discover and that's what I think is so good.”



performance

How I use e-drums



Mitch Deighton doesn't actually need drums for his drumming.

AIR-DRUMMING IS THE butt of many jokes, but anyone who has tried playing any of the new generation of drumless kits will tell you it's not as easy as it looks.

It only takes a few seconds of Mitch Deighton's YouTube Aerodrums rendition of *50 Ways to Leave Your Lover* to appreciate the skill required to do justice to air-drumming.

"I first came across Aerodrums through watching a YouTube video a friend of mine sent me from a NAMM Show around 2015," Deighton recalls. "I was absolutely fascinated and immediately had to order some. I figured that it might be a gimmick, or just a bit of fun, but either way, at \$150 it wouldn't break the bank!"

Aerodrums were an instant hit for the UK-based professional drummer.

"I was living in an apartment at the time, and the fact I could spend hours investigating the possibilities, at any time of day or night, in complete silence, was a total game-changer!"

He points out that Aerodrums are super-lightweight and portable and "perfect for being able to experiment and practise in the confines of a ship's cabin, even when sharing with a bandmate".

Anyone who has tried Aerodrums will quickly note the immediate challenge of the lack of rebound. "Essentially though, it's not much different to practising on pillows," says Deighton. "I use the back of the hand to create a kind of a 'reverse rebound' stroke. Double strokes are very hard to pull off, but totally possible. Everything else, to me, is just the same as having a 'real kit' in front of you."

Deighton has made a commitment to "be able to play as much as possible with my Aerodrums, so I set ridiculous challenges for myself, like (Toto's) *Rosanna*, for instance".

Not content with mastering the instrument, Deighton has also turned his hand to producing sample packs for his adopted virtual kits.

"I've dabbled in MIDI for many years, with various electronic drum kits I've owned. The fact that Aerodrums actually works well with MIDI is just simply incredible. I just personally prefer the 'immediacy' and simplicity of not delving into DAWs and all that comes with the MIDI route. Just playing sounds directly from Aerodrums was always the route I preferred. Obviously, there's a good but very limited selection

of sounds which come shipped with Aerodrums, so I decided to abandon MIDI completely and delve into making my own sounds to play."

What started as an activity for his own satisfaction ultimately led to a small business, recording and producing sound packs for Aerodrums.

Deighton records multiple hits (30-40 each hand) at different velocity levels, exports the recording to computer and painstakingly trims them by hand so that the waveform is really tight with the right amount of decay – "so they won't cut off unnaturally or have any lag at the start, for instance".

"Once the samples are ready, they are individually named and then I turn them into Aerodrums Element files, for upload to my shop, where they can be downloaded and literally dragged and dropped into users' Elements folder for use in their own Aerodrums kits," he explains.

The beauty of Element packs is that they are very small in comparison to the mammoth downloads associated with MIDI-based drum samplers, so users are up and running very quickly, he explains.

While Deighton has no direct link to the makers of Aerodrums, there is no doubt he is one of the company's strongest supporters and a leading exponent. "I think that as a product, Aerodrums is very unique, but entirely relevant to the world of drumming on many levels. I can see a vast potential for education purposes and just having fun, as well as a genuinely valuable tool for people who simply wouldn't be able to play even a regular electronic kit due to volume constraints," he explains.

And while he continues to play his virtual instrument, Deighton will keep working on his samples. "I have lots of ideas for expanding my range of sample packs, for instance, with cymbals, special FX and percussion. I'm currently working on a 'wide open' jazzy vintage kit using genuine '60s gear."

Check out the self-styled Aerodrummer [here](#).



Trigger Trio

Just when you thought you'd seen it all, **digitalDrummer** has uncovered three new trigger solutions aimed at DIYers.

THE LAST WAVE of internal triggers exploited the growing trend towards multi-sensor triggers, but it looks like we're seeing a "back to basics" move. There are, however, some novelties among the three triggers reviewed this time.

682Drums Edge Drum Trigger

We first reviewed the 682Drums DT2-PRO suspension system in mid-2011. It was one of two systems with a trigger plate suspended via three tensioned straps, held in place by the batter hoop. It was an elegant and cost-effective system which worked well – but was a bit tricky to install and adjust.

The Dutch e-drum company is back with a new offering which is reminiscent of the GoEdrum side-mounted trigger kit. This approach has taken off as drummers choose to avoid the risk of hot spots associated with centre-mounted triggers.

The new 682Drums trigger consists of a custom L-bracket which is used to support a largish square trigger foam. The rim trigger is a separate piece which is attached to a lug screw, ideally fitted directly opposite the head trigger.

Installation was relatively easy: remove a lug screw, attach the vertical arm of the mount, slide it up until the top of the foam protrudes 5 mm above the bearing edge, and tighten. Then, remove a lug screw diagonally opposite and mount the rim piezo.

The kit is supplied with a barrel jack ($\frac{1}{4}$ ") and quick-connect cables so that the jack can be inserted from the outside and connected up afterwards.

As usual, we fitted the trigger to a 14" snare shell, fitted a dual-ply mesh head, and then tested with a collection of modules.

Good triggering was achieved with the Gewa G9 in Roland 128 setting – so much so, that I didn't even attempt a side-mount setting. Interestingly, the module seemed to deliver positional sensing – with changes in readings from the trigger to the

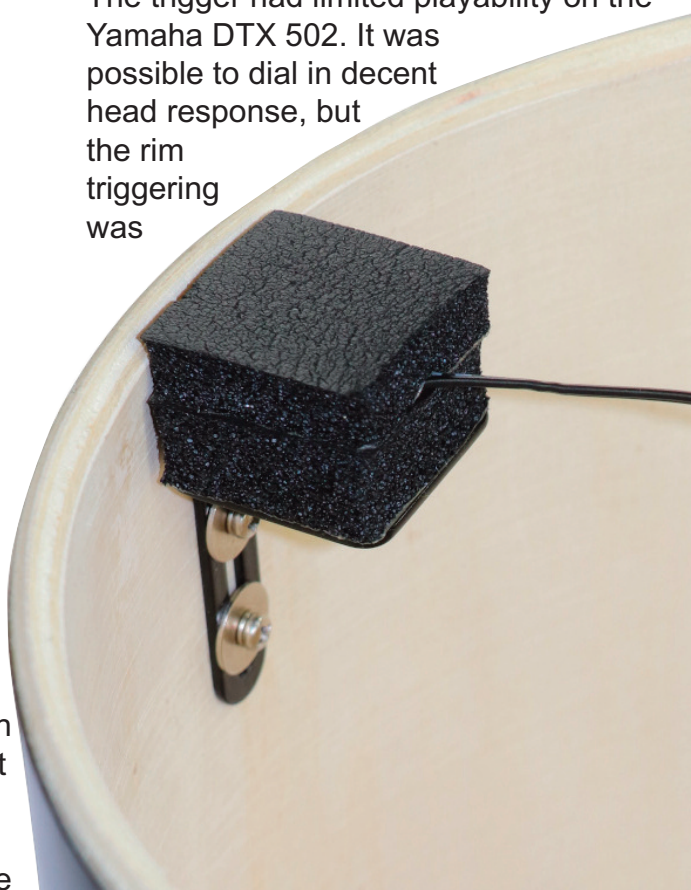
opposite edge of the drum. The PS performance was more visible than audible, and it was hard to detect through my headphones. But it was there, for sure! Rim response was good but limited to about a third of the hoop.

For the Roland TD-30 and newer TD-27, the trigger performed well with Pad2 preset after I increased the sensitivity, boosted the rim gain and adjusted the HR balance in favour of the rim (TD-27) and also dropped the threshold for the TD-30. When dialled in, performance was good: excellent dynamic range and good sensitivity for head triggering, but the rim response was again limited to around 40% of the hoop, making positioning of the sensor very important.

On the Pearl mimicPRO, I got best performance from Stealth14 preset which Jman developed for his multi-sensor edge-mounted trigger.

The Alesis Strike showed its pickiness with this trigger: it was relatively easy to dial in good head triggering, but rim response was sorely lacking. It ranged from too much to nothing at all with the slightest adjustment.

The trigger had limited playability on the Yamaha DTX 502. It was possible to dial in decent head response, but the rim triggering was



unpredictable and certainly not to the standard achieved on other modules.

Connected to the Roland TM-2, the trigger produced excellent response and dynamic range for both head and rim playing with PD128 preset and almost no tweaking.

Interestingly, when connected to an eDRUMin, the Mesh Side Piezo preset was not workable, producing way too much rim triggering which couldn't be successfully dialled out. However, perfect triggering was quickly achieved with the stock Roland PD128 setting.

Price: €49/\$55

What we liked: Easy to fit and good performance with most modules.

What we liked less: No positional sensing for Roland modules. Rim response is limited to around half of the hoop.

Oval Drums Engineering OVAL HT01 Drum Triggers

French new entrant Oval Drums says its mission is to prove that A2E conversions can be easy, light, reversible and cheap while providing good performance.

The system is unique in its use of a 3D-printed "frame" that mounts on the shell, but supports a trigger in the centre of the drum.

The developer tells **digitalDrummer** that he spent most of his time researching the perfect ratio between the drum diameter and the tension of the "spring blade" mount.

The kit has changed slightly since my test – as have the installation instructions, but I will report on the process we followed and the results.

Unlike most internal triggers, the HT01 is fitted from the bottom. Even with my shallow snare shell, it required the removal of two lug screws and while the video makes it look easy, it was very hard to access the screws since the spring blade was in the way of the screwdriver. This was particularly challenging for the top screw, and I had to remove the head to attach that. Because of the thickness of the mount, I also had to replace the screws with longer ones.

While most triggers are positioned by measuring the overhang of the trigger foam from the bearing edge, with Oval, the optimal position is determined by pressing the trigger against the head from the inside until its diameter squashes to 15 mm. (This is not the easiest approach and I understand that because of my feedback - new instructions will direct installation from the top, with an overhang guide to help



with positioning). Like the 682Drums trigger, the sensors are supplied with quick connect terminals to allow them to be threaded through the air vent and connected to a jack on the outside. I didn't like the original jack box design because it left the bare wires exposed – but again, this has been updated with a more robust solution.

While others are moving to side-mounted triggers to avoid hot spots, the HT01 aims to ensure event triggering and positional sensing through the central placement of the trigger. This can be a blessing or a curse, as I discovered in the testing.

The blessing first: on the Gewa G9, the trigger performed well in Roland PD-128 settings – with a bit of head gain and a boost to rim sensitivity. The trigger produced accurate positional sensing without a pronounced hot spot.

While I was able to get positional sensing with both the Roland TD-27 and TD-30 using the stock PD128 preset, I had to abandon that setting in favour of my trusted Pad2 setting because the overall response was not good in PD128 setting, regardless of the tweaking. The main issue

was an inability to dial out false rim triggering in the former setting, but in Pad2 setting, I had to actually increase rim sensitivity slightly. That done, I achieved good dynamic range and even triggering right around the drum.

On the Pearl mimicPRO, I got good responsiveness and dynamic range without too much hotspotting in PD128 mode, with just a little refinement of the top velocity limit.

Triggering on the Alesis Strike module was okay, but not great. I had to reduce sensitivity and raise the threshold to get decent head triggering, but rim response was less than optimal – which is not surprising with the Alesis module and 'non-Alesis' triggers. (Jman explained to me that the Alesis module seems to need much 'cleaner' signals – rim with no head and head with no rim at all.)

The HT01 was quite difficult to dial in for the 2Box DrumIt Three. Starting with the PadPP preset, it required a reduction in sensitivity, threshold and rim threshold. But, when it was dialled in, triggering was even and precise.

How we tested:

As in our previous tests, the trigger was installed according to the manufacturer's instructions into a 14" acoustic shell. This size was chosen in the wake of our external trigger review because it sorts the men from the boys. The converted drum was tested on the snare input of a range of modules: Gewa G9, Pearl mimicPro, ATV aD5, Roland TD-30, TD-27 and TM-2, Alesis Strike, Yamaha DTX 502, a 2Box DrumIt Three and eDRUMin. During testing, we started with the most appropriate preset and adjusted the settings for optimal performance.

Increasingly, it is becoming clear that the module plays a crucial role in effective triggering, and with a decent brain, it is generally possible to get excellent playability from almost any trigger. The other lesson is that the module preset which seems most appropriate is not always the best starting point when you dial in your new triggers. Sometimes, the less obvious presets work best.

Finally, our testing shows that some triggers are easier to dial in than others and may be more suitable for less experienced e-drummers or those who expect plug-and-play performance. So the final choice is a balance between cost, ease of installation, ease of calibration and performance.

I ran the setup wizard on the ATV aD5 using the R-PD-128 preset and got reasonable triggering at the end of the trigger training session, but still found the rims quite hot and had some difficulty taming them while still retaining enough dynamic range.

Increasingly, I'm finding the Yamaha DTX 502 to be less than user-friendly with dual-piezo triggers, and while I managed to get passable head triggering, it seemed to come at the expense of rim response. So, by the time I was happy with the playability of the one zone, the other was almost unplayable.

The trigger worked very well with a Roland TM-2 in PD128 setting. It did, however, require a modest rim boost to pick up nuanced rim triggering.

With the eDRUMin, excellent dynamics and sensitivity were achieved with a few minor tweaks of the Mesh Centre Piezo setting, including a slight increase to Xstick sensitivity. The trigger produced perfect positional sensing.

Price: €40

What we liked: Good performance with most modules and positional sensing on some.

What we liked less: Fiddly to fit and the risk of hot spots with some modules.

SkyGel E-TRIX

SkyGel is best known for its silicon damper discs used to control the overtones of acoustic drums. Given the involvement of German e-drum stalwart Sibi Siebert in the company, it was just a matter of time before a piezo was added.

The E-TRIX line consists of three variants – a dual-zone, a single-zone tom trigger and a single-zone kick trigger.

The design is simple and elegant – a small oval box containing a trigger connected to a rim-mounted TRS jack. In the case of the dual-zone version, the rim piezo is contained in the jack housing.

The head trigger is meant to attach to the head with a gel dot – which works fine on mylar heads, but I had to improvise for the 14" mesh test snare and used double-sided 3M tape.

The rim trigger/jack housing is easily attached using a tension rod.

The system is totally non-destructive and removed as easily as it is installed.

I have to admit I was a bit skeptical, reminded of the less-than-ideal triggering of the original plastic-coated Yamaha triggers which are quite similar in design. But, my fears were quickly dispelled as this set-up seemed to work with almost anything to which it was connected - virtually plug and play.

With the fussy Gewa G9, I used the Gewa 14" snare preset, with which I had to raise the threshold and the high level while also reducing the rim sensitivity to cool the rim. I got great triggering with the default linear curve.

The mimicPRO needed a few minor adjustments to the stock 14" side trigger preset: the input gain had to be raised, threshold reduced and top velocity lowered to produce excellent dynamics and sensitivity all around the head and rim.

The first big surprise was with the Alesis Strike Pro, where I actually got fantastic rim triggering right out of the box – something I have not found with any other trigger. To dial in the head response, I had to drop the threshold, increase sensitivity and switch to a Log1 curve.

The other big surprise was with the equally difficult Yamaha DTX502 - and again, this was the first 'generic' trigger to actually produce flawless triggering on both head and rim in stock DT10/20 SN setting. The trigger delivered, without doubt, the best response I have had from a non-Yamaha trigger of any description.

The flip side was that the E-TRIX took more dialling in on Roland modules than most other third-party triggers. The best triggering was on the TD-27, using my fall-back Pad2 setting which always gets me out of triggering trouble. In this case, I needed to switch to a Log1 curve and got excellent head and rim response. On the TD-30, the Pad2 preset needed a bit more adjustment – threshold had to be dropped and head/rim adjustment lowered to tame a hot rim sensor. But when that was done, bingo – great dynamics and sensitivity.



Interestingly, the TM-2, a trigger workhorse that is generally happy to play anything connected to it, also took some tweaking. In fact, the Pad2 setting didn't work well and I stumbled across much better responses with the PD85 preset. That needed a touch of sensitivity boost to get the same excellent response from the head that the rim delivered out of the box. On the 2Box DrumIt Three, I got good performance from the PadPP preset, with a boost of the gain and a switch to the Pos1 curve.

The ATV aD5 was quite hard to dial in. Here I had to start with the Roland RT Mesh preset and the trigger wizard refined that to produce almost flawless performance.

On the eDRUMin, it was virtually plug and play: I simply connected it up, selected the Mesh Side Piezo preset and hit calibrate to get great triggering in Addictive Drums 2. The only additional refinement needed was

a slight lift to the threshold – and that was really just to dial out signals I could see in the monitor but couldn't really hear through the cans.

It's worth noting that because the trigger sits on top of the head and is clearly visible, it is easy to avoid, so there's minimal risk of hot spotting. And if you position the head sensor near the rim trigger, you will also avoid hitting that at its hottest spot. So, in all, a very practical solution.

Price: €29.50/\$35

What we liked: Quick and easy to install. Almost plug and play with most modules, including the hard-to-please Yamaha DTX 502 and the Alesis Strike Pro. Rim response was fantastic, no matter when you hit it.

What we liked less: A bit more fiddly to dial in with Roland modules and also lacks positional sensing.

**Before you pull
the trigger
... Check out our reviews**



Low price, big sound



THE CHINESE CONTINUE to shake up the in-ear market with another budget offering that punches way above its weight.

E-drummers around the world have splashed out on KZ in-ears, especially the ZS10-PRO which we reviewed a while back.

Now, attention is turning to KZ's stablemate, CCA, which has added a 12-driver solution at a similar pricepoint to the 10-driver ZS10.

What's in the box?

Where the US and European brands go big on packaging with flashy boxes and stylish carry cases, CCA (like KZ) packs its in-ears in a simple cardboard box. The box

contains two in-ear units, a cable and four spare silicon tips.

So, like its cousin, there's no carry case, no cleaning tool, no ¼" adapter. In short, there are no frills with these guys.

The design is very similar to the KZ cousin, and the twisted pair cable and silicon tips are also identical to the KZs.

In action

If the packaging is basic, the instructions are even less detailed. There's no indication of left or right on the shells and no instructions on which way round the wires are attached. Luckily, my KZ experience made it easy to connect the cables, but as the connector could possibly

be clipped in in two different directions, it's not clear if you have chosen the correct polarity. (There is more information on the website and there are almost illegible L and R stamps on the cable junctions.)

The C12 is on the larger side, actually a tad larger than the ZS10, but the gentler curve of the shell makes it easier to insert and more comfortable to wear.

The next potential issue for many users is the silicon tips. They are very basic and while the three sizes mean it's almost certain that you'll get a decent and comfortable fit, you're not guaranteed optimal isolation.

This is one of the big differences between these budget offerings and the likes of Shure, which provide a wide choice of tips with even their base models.

Furthermore, the larger shaft of the CCA means that most of the aftermarket tips won't work, but luckily, the growing popularity of the Chinese in-ears is encouraging tip makers to offer compatible fits, and I used the triple flange tips I'd sourced on Amazon for the KZs – and they worked well.

I've seen a lot of chatter about the need to upgrade the cable to something more robust, but I have not been able to fault the KZ cable after almost a year of use, so I don't see any need to switch out the CCA cables either.

Sounds like

When I tested the 30 Ohm ZS10-PRO, the first thing that struck me was the volume. Well, rated 24 Ohm, the C12 has even more grunt and I had to dial my reference module back to around 8 o'clock, when most in-ears run at 12.

Overall, listening to the preset drum demo tracks, the sound was full, detailed and well-balanced at 'normal' EQ settings.

The bass was thumping and enveloping, the toms were full bodied, the crack of snares was almost jarring and the cymbals tingled.

There had been some criticism of the lack of mid-range in the ZS10s (I'm not among

the critics) and one would expect the extra driver in each of the C12s to help fill that out. I really couldn't tell the two apart on drum demos, but did sense a bit more body to the mids when listening to a full music mix.

The in-ears seem weighted towards the bass end, which suits e-drummers well. But the low-end performance is not at the expense of the upper ranges, and treble was strong without being harsh or too bright.

So, like the ZS10, the overall sound was impressive – and certainly on par with 'big name' in-ears costing hundreds of dollars more.

Bottom line

I spent some time testing the C12s with a range of modules and a variety of kit sounds, from thumping, resonant stadium rock to tight reggae and ringy jazz patches – and all felt natural and accurate.

When fitted with my preferred tips, the in-ears were comfortable and did a good job of isolating the stick noises – even with low-volume metal cymbals.

The build quality looks good and if it's anything like the ZS10, which no doubt rolls off the same production line, you shouldn't need any warranty support in the first year – or beyond.

If packaging and branding are not important to you and you don't mind forking out an extra \$10 for more comfortable tips, you can't go wrong with this \$39 purchase which is readily available on Amazon, eBay and AliExpress.

Specifications

Drivers: 5 balanced armature + 1 dynamic

Impedance: 24 Ohm

Sensitivity: 111 dB/mW

Frequency response: 7 Hz–40 kHz

Cable: 125 m

Plug type: 3.5 mm TRS unbalanced

Accessories: Three sets of silicon tips

Street price: \$39

Shopping



digitalDrummer looks at some of the online buying options for e-drums and offers a few tips.

THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC has seen e-commerce go through the roof, and the e-drum market has certainly been shaken up as more products become available through more channels.

There are no reliable statistics specifically for online e-drum sales, but analysts in the US found that, last year, hobbies (including musical instruments) experienced the second-highest growth year-on-year in online sales.

Amid that online activity, there's been a big surge in the sale of second-hand instruments, with Facebook noting a 36% increase in listings for musical instruments in 2020 in Australia, and there's every reason to believe the same trend is evident in many countries, including the US and Europe.

Facebook Marketplace was introduced in 2016 as more posters started offering their goods for sale, particularly in special interest groups.

Similarly, Reverb.com, founded in 2013, saw an explosion of listings in 2020.

Carly Smith, an editor on the content team at Reverb.com, notes that in 2020, more people bought musical instruments from Reverb sellers than ever before. "Based on what we saw on Reverb over the past year, more people — including what appear to be beginners — are making music at home. This also includes more advanced musicians who are also spending more time at home and appear to be exploring new ways to create music, record songs, and collaborate virtually," she tells **digitalDrummer**.

Smith says searches for drum machines on Reverb more than doubled year-over-year between January and October last year.

“At the onset of the pandemic, drum machines and sequencers were greatly outselling live percussion instruments, which isn’t what we typically see,” she says, adding that Reverb also saw a significant increase in downloads of its free Reverb Drum Machines sample collection which features over 50 volumes of vintage, rare, and landmark drum machines.

eBay remains a dominant online player for both used and new equipment, but the company declined to comment for this article. However, the company’s financial reports indicate that 2020 was its best year in some time, with revenues up 19% for the full year.

eBay experienced unprecedented traffic levels for most of 2020; on more than 100 days in 2020, it exceeded its highest levels from 2019.

While retail music stores beefed up their online offerings to counter forced closures and other social distancing measures, many have also done brisk trade in used gear, including e-drums. A quick check of Guitar Center’s used offerings showed more than 300 products, from a \$20 Roland PD-7 pad to a \$3,000 Roland TD-30K kit. Rival Sam Ash, meanwhile, had 60 e-drum listings among its used instruments, from a \$20 8” Carlsbro pad to a \$2,500 TD-20 kit – with a much sought-after mimicPRO also on offer.

Amid the increased online activity, drummer, publisher and entrepreneur George Lawrence recently launched a new dedicated drum marketplace, drumsellers.com.

Lawrence says the major difference from other online markets is the focus on drums. “The site is simpler with less visual clutter, and I run it as a service - not as just a flea market. I’ve established a reputation of serving and supporting the drummer community for many decades,” he explains.

“I built DrumSellers to have the warm and fuzzy aspects of the classic independent drum shops instead of just a bunch of listings. Right now, if a buyer or a seller calls or emails, they get me. Or they can ask their question in the community forum on the site, which is very active. I also allow trades without a commission, listings for free gear and just showing off your drums. I provide educational content about tuning, head selection, drum maintenance, etc. - answers to the questions typically asked in a drum shop.”

Lawrence is aware of the pitfalls of some of his giant rivals: “I want DrumSellers to grow but not get ‘overgrown’ like the mega-sites. I will add other features, services and customer service people, but not at the expense of raising fees or adding products that have nothing to do with drums or becoming impersonal. I guard the site against scammers by vetting every seller. The one and only fee is the lowest of all the musical instrument markets and I will keep it that low.”

Protecting buyers

Of course, the rise of online e-drum trade has also increased the level of fraud, and scams abound, especially on platforms like Marketplace.

A Facebook spokeswoman says the platform encourages people to buy and sell responsibly. “We want our community to have a great experience on Marketplace, so we have rules in place for our community to follow. For example, before a listing is posted, our technology reviews listings and will automatically block listings we believe violate our policies. We also make it really easy for people to report sellers and listings, and when violating content is reported to us, we take the appropriate action.”

Facebook offers the following tips to help avoid scams:

- **Learn more about the item you want to buy.** Ask a lot of questions before buying an item you’re interested in. Make sure you are able to see pictures that show all

angles of the item, and get information from the seller about an item's history, authenticity and current condition. Thoroughly inspect the item before buying and test it if possible.

- **Learn more about the seller.** Spend a few minutes learning more about a seller by looking at their profile to see the friends you may have in common, reviewing their Marketplace activity and reviewing any ratings they may have received.

- **Keep your personal information protected.** Never share personal or banking information that could put your identity or money at risk. Use Messenger when possible to communicate so you don't have to give your personal phone number or email address.

- **Report a listing or a seller if you have any problems.** If you have an issue with a person or an item that's listed, such as violating community standards, harassing behaviour or scams, it's easy to report to Facebook. Just look for a Report link on the listing or on the seller's Marketplace profile.

According to Reverb's Smith, for buyers, communication can go a long way. "On Reverb, we make it easy to communicate directly with sellers, so you can ask questions, get more information on the gear's history, and even ask for more pictures if you want to see more detail. Another tip is to check the seller's return policy: On sites like Reverb that feature many different sellers, shops are able to create their own individual return policies. Take the extra step to make sure you understand a shop's policy on returns before you purchase.

"For sellers, Reverb has a number of resources to help you at every step of the selling process. When you list your gear for sale, you can check our selling guide, which includes pricing history data to help price your item. After you sell, we securely process payments for you, and for both buyers and sellers, Reverb's global support team of musicians and music lovers is available if you have a question or an issue."

eBay is aware of numerous scams and fraudulent practices and encourages customers to use its PayPal payment method for increased peace of mind.

Other eBay tips include:

- Make sure you are logged in to the real eBay site.
- Complete your payment using an eligible payment method. Do not share your credit card or other financial information over email or text.
- Don't be fooled by fraudulent emails directly from the seller telling you that there was something wrong with your payment.
- Don't be fooled by offers to get a better price by paying outside of eBay or by using an unapproved payment method. Due to potential for fraud, we don't allow buyers and sellers to complete sales outside of eBay. These sales are not eligible for Feedback, requests for contact information, or eBay's problem resolution services.
- The eBay Money Back Guarantee covers the purchase price plus original shipping if the item doesn't match the seller's description. Buyers need to pay with an eligible payment method. Cash, cheques, and money orders are not covered by the eBay Money Back Guarantee.
- Don't transfer money directly into a seller's bank account. Instead, use a secure payment site such as PayPal, where money is transferred between two electronic accounts.
- Avoid communicating with sellers privately off eBay. The record of your communications will provide helpful backup information in case you have problems with your purchase or payment later.
- Don't agree to unusual requests to make additional payments for shipping or other previously unlisted charges after the sales transaction is complete. Don't share unnecessary personal information with buyers or sellers.
- Never accept overpayments from buyers for items, especially if the buyer asks to be reimbursed for overpayment.





"Music can help you express yourself in a way that sometimes words can't."

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My **MONSTER** kit

Othonas Mpempekis from Xanthi, Greece shares his kit story.

The kit

Millenium MX200 shell pack (8", 10", 12", 14" and 16" toms)

Snare: Pearl Export 14" (triggered)

Side Snare: Alesis 12" mesh pad

Bass drums: 2 x 20"

Modules:

ATV xd3, Alesis DM10x

Triggers:

Helensson, R-Drums, Jobeky and a couple of DIYs

Cymbals:

Hi-hat: Roland CY-14C with a goEdrum controller, Alesis DMpad 14" with the Alesis pedal controller

Ride: Alesis DMpad 16"

Crashes: 2 x 16" Lemon cymbals

Chinas: Alesis DMpad 14" cymbal, Triggera D14

Splashes: Roland CY-5, Alesis DMpad 10", Triggera D11, Millenium MPS-300 (used as a tambourine), DIY e-cowbell

Othonas' story

I wanted to start playing the drums when I first heard Dream Theater's *Once in a Lifetime* back in '99, but due to circumstances, that didn't really happen until a couple of years ago. I bought myself an Alesis DM10x mesh kit with the aim of recreating Mike Portnoy's kit. When I found out about acoustic-to-electronic conversions, I knew that this was going to be the way to go. I did my own conversion on a limited budget, getting cheap acoustic shells piece by piece. It's still a work in progress, as some of my current cymbals will be replaced and a set of octobans will be added, but I'm really close to finishing my dream kit and I'm loving the journey.



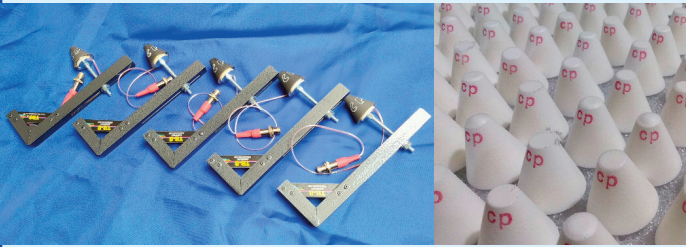


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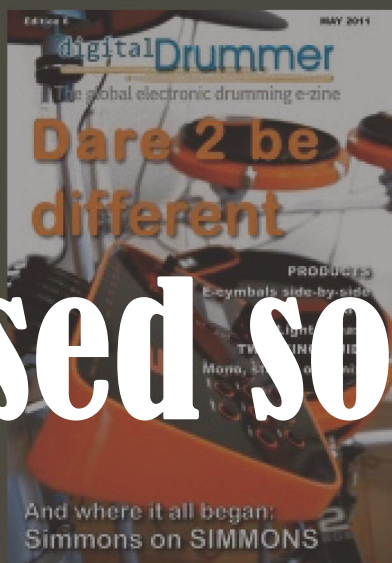
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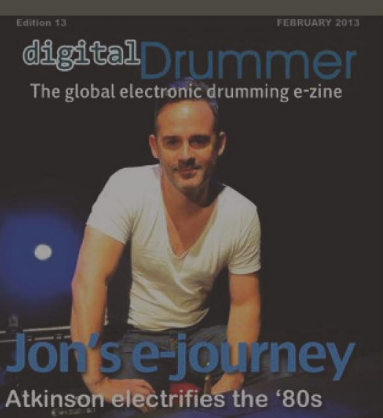
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