

YAMAHA

ROCK TOUR KIT by David Ciauro

MODERNDRUMMER
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MODERNDRUMMER
DIGITALLY ENHANCED

Current economic trends haven't stopped Yamaha from introducing new products to the market, but what has changed is the company's approach. The strategy behind Yamaha's lineup of Rock Tour kits found its niche in the following three ways: by visually captivating an audience with edgy, eye-catching aesthetics; by targeting a genre-specific demographic; and by emphasizing the quality of the select number of kit configurations produced.

THE SPECS

Rock Tour drums are available in five finishes. There's matte metallic silver and matte metallic black, both of which come with matte silver lugs and hoops and feature 9-ply reformed big leaf mahogany shells. The other three finishes are textured ash in green, red sunburst, and smoke sunburst, with chrome hoops and lugs and 6-ply big leaf mahogany/2-ply textured ash shells.

All Rock Tour drums have 1.6 mm triple-flange hoops, and the toms are equipped with the same YESS mounts seen on high-end Yamaha models. The four-piece kit with a matching snare in this review sells for \$1,199.

LOOK FAMILIAR?

The matte metallic black set on review here may have you wondering, *Where have I seen that kit before?* The Lexus car company handpicked these slick-looking drums to star in one of its commercials—and showed the drums so much that it was hard to discern whether you were watching a Lexus commercial featuring Yamaha drums or vice versa.

In the world of musical instru-

ments, buying gear on looks alone can be a dangerous thing. Young players, however, are particularly eye-driven consumers, and with the matte finish options as a lure, Yamaha is sure to catch plenty of fish. Rock Tour kits call out to young, hard-rocking drummers who are perhaps initially preoccupied by how their kits fit their band's image more than by how they sound. Yamaha, of course, takes pride in producing quality instruments, so the company could not forsake upholding its standards.

In an effort to keep production costs down, Yamaha decided to research and produce the most popular sizes being used by young rock drummers. Instead of offering consumers the option of choosing any size and depth along with a multitude of finishes, the company scaled back the quantity in order to make the Rock Tour line more affordable. Then Yamaha dressed up the kits with looks that kill—and made them sound pretty killer too.

TRUE MAHOGANY SHELLS

Big leaf mahogany was chosen for the Rock Tour line because it's a true mahogany that's cost effective, and it can be harvested in a more environmentally conscious way. Grown in a managed forest in Indonesia, this particular wood is very hard. The hardness is said to increase the drums' projection. Another attractive quality is the warmth and body in the tone that comes from the hardness of the wood.

THE TONES

Without any muffling on the 18x22 kick, the ring was a bit overbearing, and the tone lacked focus. After I placed a pillow inside the drum and tuned both heads just tighter

than wrinkling, the clear Remo Powerstroke 3 batter head gave a nice slappy attack plus boxy sub-frequencies that I felt in my chest. Other tunings didn't yield better results, so I stuck with that one, which suited the intended rock/punk genre well enough. One word of warning, though, in regard to the bass drum claws: They do not retract, and thus the bottom spike is always exposed.

The 8x12 tom and 15x16 floor tom were equipped with Remo Pinstripe batter heads, and lower tunings again sounded best. There was an equal balance of attack and focused tones, with a lively presence but a short decay. The tone was firmly contained, which was especially useful when I played rolling 16th-note fills. The downside of the preferred lower tuning was a decreased stick response.

On most "affordable" kits I've played, the matching wood snares have been the least exciting of the bunch. Along those lines, the 6x14 matching big leaf mahogany snare on this kit was simply okay. The tone was constricted and, in general, not impressively expressive. When I cranked up the coated Ambassador batter head and applied some Moongel, however, a dry "crack" sat nicely over the punchy-sounding toms and kick.

CONCLUSION

The Rock Tour line is meant to cater to the young rock and/or punk drummer—an audience that Yamaha hasn't previously gone after with such vigor. The result is gratifying on the visual, aural, and economic fronts. But although the quality is present, the overall diversity and tonality of the Rock Tour models are unavoidably, if not intentionally, focused in their appeal.

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SPECIFIC LINEUP

Rock Tour drums are offered in a limited number of sizes, in order to keep production costs down and to reflect the setups that today's young rock drummers are commonly playing. The line includes 7x10, 8x12, and 9x13 rack toms; 13x14 and 15x16 floor toms; an 18x22, 10-lug bass drum; and either a matching 6x14, 10-lug snare or a 5 1/2x14, 10-lug chromed steel version.



ROCK TOUR REBELS

To promote the spirit of the Rock Tour line, Yamaha hooked up four up-and-coming rock drummers in unsigned bands. These Rock Tour Rebels (from left, Fusebox Funk's Jeff "ByrDog" Byrd, Voodoo Glow Skulls' Chris Dalley, Ryan Peel Band's Ryan Peel, and Crane's Justin Sims) are taking Rock Tour kits on the road to help show off the sights and sounds of the new line.