

Istanbul

Agop Alchemy Pro Cymbals

From £115 | Traditionally meant for jazz, Istanbul is targeting rockers with its newest range. **Geoff Nicholls** tries them out.

ESSENTIALS



PRICES

Istanbul Agop Alchemy Pro Cymbals	
Hi-hats	£195
Crashes	£115-£139
Rides	£195

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Back in 1980, the Istanbul cymbal company arose from the demise of the legendary K Zildjian factory in Istanbul. Agop Tomurcuk was the Turkish gentleman who started the company and who had previously been foreman at K Zildjian for many years. Istanbul has therefore always been seen as the real successor to the old Ks.

They're an entirely handcrafted cymbal, wrought in the traditional manner. But cymbals have come a long way over the past quarter century and Istanbul, while hanging on to the old craft and mystique, has greatly expanded its ranges to include many different types with different characteristics.

Turkish power

The review cymbals were all from the Alchemy Professional Power category, except for a single Alchemy Professional Raw ride. With the K heritage, Istanbul has been perceived more as a jazz player's cymbal in the past. But the Alchemy Power cymbals are bright and modern and evidently targeted at least as

much at rockers. They're also just a small sample of what is an extensive range. For example, Alchemy Professional hi-hats also include Sweet, Regular and Custom models; rides include Sweet, Medium, Rock and Raw models and there are Effects cymbals including splashes, bells and chinas.

However, back to the Power cymbals. They're a great looking bunch. On top they are half lathed and half smooth while the bells are absolutely smooth. The undersides are fully lathed and both top and bottom are hammered with light dimples. There's the large Alchemy logo while Professional is written in smaller script, plus each cymbal is stamped with the names Arman and Sarkis Tomurcuk, the two sons of Agop who have carried forward the company since their father's premature death in 1996.

Raw power

Today we have just two rides for consideration, the Power ride and Raw ride, both 21" in diameter. I took a handful of the review cymbals out on a gig this

These cymbals veer towards the rock end of the spectrum, but Istanbul's traditional handcrafted production means they are adaptable and could work in many settings.



KEY FEATURES



The cymbals

look great with their brilliant hammered finishes.

Alchemy Professional cymbals are entirely

handmade in Istanbul's famous Turkish foundry – grab yourself a slice of history.

weekend and really enjoyed playing them. However, I did encounter an interesting problem with the 21" Power ride. It has a high domed, almost semi-circular profile bell which is highly polished. What I found – and this is a new one on me – was that the stick tended to slip off the bell quite disconcertingly, especially when played hard. The problem wasn't noticeable with the Raw ride which has a more usual profile, lower domed bell. I also found the bell on the Power ride could be a bit dull unless you caught it in just the right spot with just the right angle and part of the stick. This must be down to the shape of the bell. When you do catch it right the sound is agreeable and melodious.

Anyway, that aside, everything else is positive. The actual ride sound is bright, clear, loud and on the right side of raucous – just right for all-round classic rock playing, but with a lingering touch of dark trashiness that gives it a funky versatility. The after-tone decay is lengthy and bright, with plenty of body.



The 21" Raw ride looks different to the other reviewed cymbals. It is not lathed but is hammered and heavily dimpled over the entire surface, above and below. With a lower basic pitch than the Power ride, it has a well defined, drier stick sound coupled with an overall gutsy power. The slightly flatter dome of the bell responds more easily and freely than the bell on the Power ride. No problems there. The after tone/decay this time is shorter and darker, less piercing than that of the Power ride.

Crash landing

For review we have three Power crashes, 16", 17" and 18". Although described as Power crashes, they are not stupidly heavy and painfully brash like some I've encountered. On the contrary, I found them cultured and well rounded. They're actually medium weight rather than heavy, so they are pretty fast and almost dry. A glancing blow delivers a full bodied whoosh which decays quite quickly and yet is not thin. There's just the smallest

hint of traditional K-style trashiness which just adds to the overall character.

The 16" is definitely what I'd describe as a fast crash, while the 18" is fuller and relatively loud though still quick to respond. In between, the 17" has a bit of both – it's still fast, it's bright and it has body and colour. All-in-all, this is a rather pleasing little collection.

Forceful hi-hats

There's just the one pair of 14" Power hats. The 'Power' designation seems to suit the hats rather better than the crashes since the hi-hats are more forceful. I'm sure they're the same gauge as the crashes, but being smaller that makes them feel relatively heavier, if you catch my drift.

Where relatively heavy hi-hats score over thin hi-hats is when you play them closed. Light hats, when closed, often produce a pathetically feeble tick, while pedaling is a waste of time if you're in a loud rock band. Heavier cymbals give you a fulsome tone when closed and a loud

chick when pedaled. And this is what we have here. The closed tone is strong and well defined and rises considerably in pitch as you ease your foot off the pedal, gradually opening up the cymbals and whacking them with the shoulder of the stick. Plus the pedaled, chick sound is bright and clear. **R**

RHYTHM VERDICT

To reiterate, please bear in mind that this is just a small sample of Istanbul's Power series, showing just one side of the company's varied ranges. Although these cymbals veer more towards the rock end of the spectrum, Istanbul's traditional handcrafted production means the cymbals are adaptable and could work in many musical settings. They're not the most sophisticated cymbals, but they have loads of character and presence. Many drummers overlook the smaller cymbal companies such as Istanbul and that's a pity. Istanbul offers a real alternative at a tempting price.

+ Genuinely handmade traditional cymbals with a proven pedigree at tempting prices.

- Not crazy about the bell on the Power ride.

RATING

