

# Yamaha

## Oak Custom Drum Kit

**£1,369** | Can new finishes and more sizes take these acclaimed oak drums to a bigger audience? **Adam Jones** is swayed...

### ESSENTIALS



### PRICES

Yamaha Oak Custom Drum Kit (10", 12", 16", 22")  
 Shell pack **£1,369**  
 14"x7" snare **£254**  
 14"x14" floor tom **£289**  
 800 Series hardware pack **£389**

### CONTACT

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Yamaha's Oak Custom drums made their debut nearly five years ago. In that time they have found fans among a broad range of players. Jazzers are attracted by the wide open yet clean nature of drums made of oak, while rockers are impressed by the wood's strong fundamental tones and capacity for volume. With a variety of drummers already tuned into the benefits of an alternative wood, Yamaha has expanded the Oak Custom range further, introducing three new lacquer finishes and a greater choice of individual drums.

### From the smallest acorn

Oak is an extremely hard and durable wood, commonly used to make floorboards, doors and furniture. When made into drums, its hardness imparts distinctive sonic characteristics, but this very toughness has foxed many previous attempts at creating drums from it.

Yamaha experimented for some time before launching the original Oak Custom series, only going into production after almost universally positive artist feedback. The company's Air Seal System of manufacturing and the diagonal seams it employs help achieve consistent results from a demanding wood. Though difficult to work, oak is fairly cheap as a raw material, so Yamaha can market the drums at a competitive price.

The first Oak Custom kits were distinguished by some quirky sizes, not least among floor toms, which came in 13" and 15" diameters. Though making perfect sense for the wood involved, these uncommon sizes never really caught on, with most drummers opting for even number-sized floor toms. Accordingly, Yamaha has reverted to more conventional 14", 16" and 18" floor toms, which pretty much covers most musical palettes. Some of the quiriness remains however; the toms are all Universal lengths (deeper than Quick sizes but substantially shorter than Power depths), while three of the four bass drums (20", 22" and 24" diameters) are 17" in length, with the 18" model being 15" deep. While super-deep bass drums are all the rage, a greater range of sounds is possible from shorter kicks, so 17" would seem a sensible compromise between outright power and a more rounded versatility.

The shell pack supplied is bang up to the minute, comprising a 22"x17" bass drum, 10"x8" and 12"x9" rack toms and a 16"x16" floor tom. An extra 14"x14" floor tom was also included, along with a 14"x7" snare drum. There are two other shell packs available; the same bass drum and rack toms with a 14" floor tom, and a 20"x17", 10"x8", 12"x9", 14"x14" kit. A 14"x5½" snare and individual toms from 8" to 16" complete the options. ▶



**The 800 Series hardware** that came with the review kit is good quality, but is not supplied with the shell packs.



**There are three** shell packs on offer, with extra toms available separately.

### KEY FEATURES



### JUST SAY YESS!

Yamaha's YESS mounts ensure that the toms and floor toms remain fully resonant at all times.

**Remo heads are fitted on** all the drums, and the toms and snare boast 2.3mm triple-flanged DynaHoops.

**The shell construction differs** across the kit. The six-ply toms and snare are 6.6mm thick, and the seven-ply bass drum is 7.7mm.

**While deep bass drums are** all the rage, those that come with the Oak Custom kits are either 17" or 15" in length.



**OAK'S NO JOKE**

Oak's sound characteristics – powerful and harmonically rich – make it an ideal material for making drums.



**SUPER SPARKLE**

The new Silver Sparkle finish adds a distinctly glam touch to the new Oak Custom kit.



**WARM AND WOODY**

The snare brings out the oak's best features – it has a toppy bite with plenty of woody warmth.

## Oak has its own set of sound characteristics... not as dark as maple, nor as bright as birch.

### Oak gets in your eyes

Up to this point, Oak Custom drums have only been available in one finish, York Honey Amber, a light, warm stain that lets the grain of the wood below blush through. There are three new lacquer finishes, the snazziest of which, Silver Sparkle, graces the review kit. Again very much of the moment, it's the sort of finish that makes any kit more desirable. The other two new finishes are Musashi Black and Red Oak, which are more akin to the York Honey Amber.

The shells differ slightly in construction over the kit, with the toms, floor toms and snare all being 6.6mm deep and six plies thick, while for the bass drums the figures are 7.7mm and seven plies respectively. Inside the shells, the hue of oak is unmistakable and very attractive. The lugs are sleek, bullet-style examples attached to the shells with a single bolt for minimal shell contact. The lugs also have a nylon insert to prevent the tension rods from loosening off. The provision of lugs across the kit is excellent, with 10 at each end on the bass and snare drum, while the toms are similarly well equipped for their diameters. Remo heads are found on all of the drums, while 2.3mm triple-flanged DynaHoops are fitted to the toms, floor toms and snare drum. The bass drum sports matching wooden hoops and its hexagonally locking spurs are the same as those fitted on Absolute series bass drums.

The toms are mounted by Yamaha's Enhanced Sustain System (YESS). Long found on Yamaha's high-end kits, the YESS mounts attach at the nodal point of each drum, where they are least likely to interrupt sustain. Only two bolts are used to fix each mount to

the toms, and the tom arms do not penetrate the shell. The YESS system is employed on the floor toms too, with the leg clamps being anchored by two bolts apiece.

Oak Custom kits are supplied as shell packs only, but the 800 Series hardware pack sent with the review kit is of good quality.

### Oak music

Oak has its own set of sound characteristics, predominantly its strong fundamental tones. Nowhere is this more evident than in the bass drum, where deepness and power is balanced by definition. It produces a low, hard note that carries beautifully. Among all the bassiness there is a clear presence to the drum – oak is not as dark-sounding as maple, nor as bright as birch. The drum sounds EQed without any dampening and even when tuned really low, gives a clean note.

The 14"x7" snare also brings out the best features of oak, delivering a fantastic crack that mixes topmy bite with woody warmth. Its depth adds authority and clarity, which remain undimmed through a variety of tunings. The hardness of the wood means that as vigour is applied to the drum it responds with equal aggression, snapping back with real venom. Ghost notes sizzle away with clarity, while rim shots concentrate the sound even more.

The toms are brimming with mid-range power and musicality. There is a tautness to them that makes it difficult to imagine them getting lost in the mix. Tonally they are very controlled, with virtually non-existent overtones, yet they are full of warmth and expression and capable of turning on the volume in style. **B**

### RHYTHM VERDICT

The popularity of conventional drum woods means that different shell materials can all too easily be automatically filed under niche market, but on the evidence of this kit, oak should be up there in the mainstream. It makes for musical, versatile drums and this is a solid, well-specified, pro-standard kit, with the snare being particularly impressive. The new Silver Sparkle finish brings a touch of visual pizzazz to the kit. Whether or not oak can ever become a genuine third option of shell material remains to be seen, but it certainly deserves to.



Unusual wood that is different, but more than equal to, maple or birch, great finish.



If you don't try them, you won't know what you're missing.

RATING

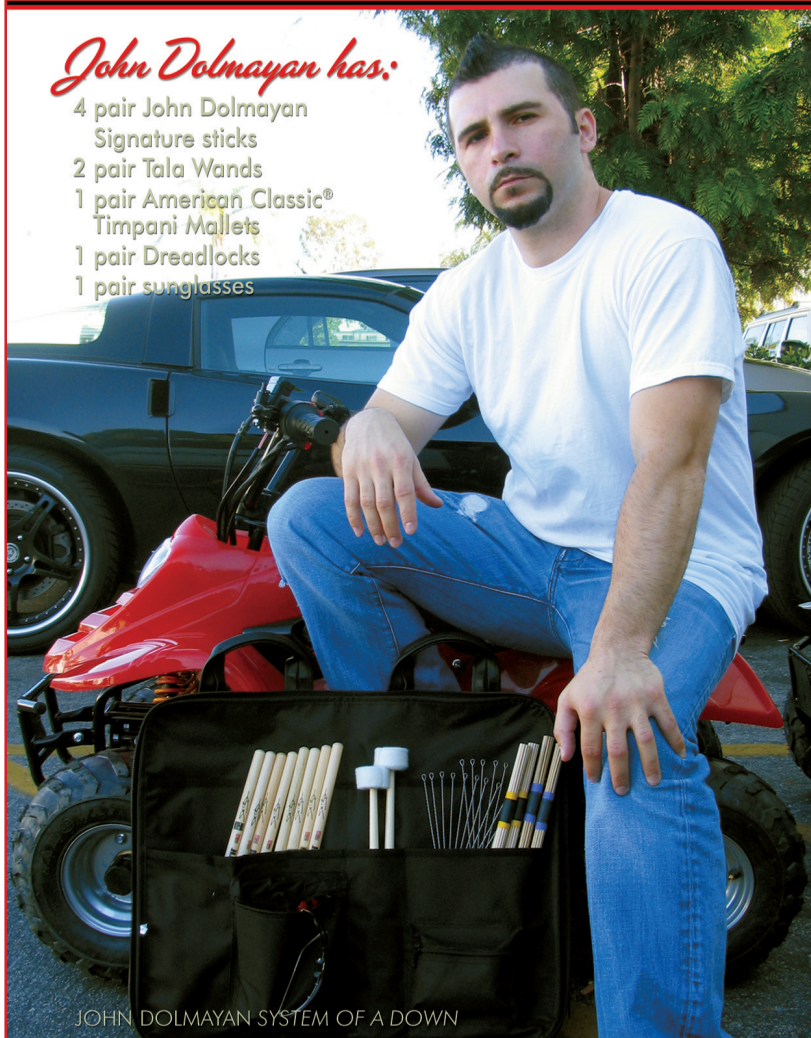


OCTOBER 2006 RHYTHM 099

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JOHN DOLMAYAN SYSTEM OF A DOWN

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