

Yamaha

Tour Custom Kit

£999 | Yamaha's Stage Custom is a long-time staple of the semi-pro drum market, but **Jordan McLachlan** discovers a new all-maple offering.

ESSENTIALS



PRICES

Yamaha Tour Custom Kit (as shown – including hardware and add-on 14" floor tom) **£1,142**
Shell Packs start from **£629**

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The all-maple drum shells are made using Yamaha's Air Seal System.

The word 'custom' has figured a great deal in the history of Yamaha drums. We've had Recording Customs, Beech Customs, Stage Customs and now we welcome the new Tour Custom, a mid-market set-up with some high-end features. Despite the similar name this is no return of the modern-classic Rock Tour Custom of the '90s. Instead it's a set designed to offer a vintage vibe at non-vintage prices. So is Yamaha's new Tour Custom a win-win kit for tonehounds?

Eastern promise

As a sister kit for Yamaha's popular Stage Custom set, it's no surprise to discover that the Tour Custom originates in Indonesia, just as the Stage Custom does. There's no escaping the fact that the location of such production facilities adds little to the sexiness of a drum kit – there's still something of a cachet about US or UK-made gear – but the marketplace is now more than accepting of drums with Far Eastern origins. And so it should be. The leaps made in manufacturing quality in recent years and the keen eye kept on far-flung factories by marketing and design bods means that standards are higher than ever before. And the cost-value ratio of

such kits means they make a lot of sense to the vast majority of drum buyers.

Given its Japanese roots, Yamaha has enormous experience of building drums in the Far East. As with all of the company's instrument output, the feel of the Tour Custom is one of real consistency and quality. The shells are 100 percent maple and although I'm not one to get hung up on raw materials – particularly not at this relatively modest price point – there's no denying that they're extremely well finished and beautifully presented.

Externally the shells are treated to a lacquer of typically Yamaha luster – with our six-piece set-up finished in suitably retro Brown Sunburst – and fitted with YESS suspension mounts. Underneath the shiny bits are bearing edges of 60°, as opposed to the sharper 45° edges that are used elsewhere in the Yamaha line-up. The maple shell and rounded bearing edges are the features that the company is clearly relying on to hook in those punters with a penchant for a classically fat low-end response. Where kits of birch and beech tend towards more upper mid-range cut and thrust, the Tour Custom is clearly crafted so as to offer as much warmth and smoothness as possible.

Standing proud

While we're dealing with the physical aspects of the kit, I should mention the generously proportioned hardware pack supplied with the Tour Custom here. Made in the Yamaha motorcycle factory (where things need to be built properly, for obvious reasons), the double-braced metalwork is top notch. Pearl, DW and Tama might have the edge in terms of image where brand hardware is concerned but I've always found Yamaha stuff to be as enduring as anything else, and easy to set up too.

There's certainly nothing among the selection here that I would shy away from ▶

KEY FEATURES



TUNEFUL TONE

The two rack toms have a great tone and are easy to tune – mid-to-low tension sounds superb.



Two floor toms is a nice, unusual configuration. The 14" and 16" toms lend a valuable low-end contribution to the Tour Custom tone.

At just shy of a grand for the big kit here, the Tour Custom represents really good value. And it'll handle most gigs you care to throw at it.



Having an extra inch of bass drum depth is increasingly common. And the 22"x17" kick here is a good example of modern bass drumming.



PLENTY OF POWER
The bass drum is 7mm and seven plies thick. It exudes an air of seriousness, and there's plenty of oomph lurking inside.



SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE
YESS mounts on rack toms are a familiar sight on Yamaha kits. The design is simple and extremely effective.



ALL-MAPLE ALL-ROUNDER
The Tour Custom set is completed by a matching all-maple snare that should suit the majority of players.

This is a set designed to offer a vintage vibe at non-vintage prices. Is the Tour Custom a win-win for tonehounds?

using in anger. The stands are all suitably hefty and the hi-hat stand and kick pedal are pro-standard items – they might not challenge the real top-end stuff in terms of features but they turn in a very decent performance. If you're upgrading your whole set-up (or are in the enviable position of contemplating a Tour Custom as your first kit) then the hardware pack is a good bet, adding less than £300 to the cost of the five-piece kit.

Choose your weapon

There are several options when it comes to specifying a Tour Custom set. You can have a kit with or without hardware (a choice of either lightweight 700 series stands or the 800 beefers we've got here) and in either four-piece or five-piece configurations. What we have here is a 'standard' five-piece (22"x17" bass drum, 10"x8" and 12"x9" mounted toms and, unusually, a 16"x16" floor tom) with an

additional 14"x14" floor tom thrown in for good measure. As such it's a pretty comprehensive set-up, completed by a matching 14"x6" maple-shell snare.

In common with all Yamaha wood-shell drums, the Tour Custom is built using the company's Air Seal System (it involves putting an inflatable bag inside the shell while the drums are moulded). The method evidently ensures good, lasting roundness and, although oval-shaped drums don't seem to have been a problem for decades, the fact that the brand makes mention of it in its promotional material is a reflection of the seriousness with which it takes its drum building responsibilities.

What's unarguable is that the drums (which are six-ply and 6mm thick in the case of toms and seven-ply and 7mm on the bass drum) exude an air of real seriousness, and back this up with instantly impressive tone. Even with the stock, slightly underwhelming heads still in place, the Tour Custom – particularly

the toms – announces itself with a fruity, rich noise that's quickly addictive. I've always liked 10" and 12" Yamaha toms and these two are nicely boingy and elastic without being bugged by nasty ringing. They're easy to tune as well, with mid-low tension working beautifully.

The kick and snare are good too, and promise much in the way of sweetness, although the bass drum is the element of the Tour Custom that I think will most benefit from a really good head in place of the OEM offering. As it is, it's just a little too cardboardy and shy in terms of those developed low frequencies that both drive and anchor a band at full-tilt. But you can tell there's an extra degree of oomph lurking within...

There's little wrong with the snare as it arrives, although again you'll probably do well to swap the head for your particular favourite. Snares are such a personal thing that you might not get on with the 14"x6" model at all, but I have a feeling that many of those who splash out on the Tour Custom will find it to their liking. Although there's a traditional influence going on here, don't mistake this for a jazz set only – it's a great multi-purpose kit and the snare sits happily among the other drums, being able to crank out AC/DC-like backbeats and funky ghostnotes and do both really rather well. **R**



RHYTHM VERDICT

It seems ages since I got my hands on a new Yamaha acoustic kit, and I'm glad that the Tour Custom broke the dry spell. Mid-range kits are stunning value these days and the Tour Custom is a superb example of the features and shell quality that reasonably modest money can score you. The Stage Custom has served Yamaha extremely well, but with all-maple shells, great hardware, cracking finishes, nice old-school vibe and prices that start at £629, the Tour Custom will have an awful lot of drummers drooling over it.

+ It's really difficult to find anything to pick holes in...

- ...although a choice of only four colours is a bit tight.

RATING



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