

Mapex

Saturn LA Drum Kit

£1,065 | The Saturn LA proves that there are more uses for walnut than lining the dashboards of expensive cars, as **Adam Jones** discovers.

ESSENTIALS



PRICES
Mapex Saturn LA drum kit
 Shellpack without hardware **£1,065**

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After the success of last year's Pro M LA kit, Mapex has now applied the LA treatment to its Saturn range of drums. As you may recall, the LA configuration takes a standard four-piece kit and tweaks the key elements into something a little more radical. The Pro M LA kit was received enthusiastically by punters as an all-maple four-piece kit with attitude. The Saturn series differs from the Pro M in that the shells are created from a mixture of maple and walnut, creating an unmistakable sonic footprint.

Four drums good...

The LA shellpack is built around a super stretched 22"x20" bass drum, which is undrilled for any hardware other than lugs. Partnering the kick is an appropriately deep 14"x7" snare drum. A 12"x9" rack tom (clamped off a cymbal stand) and a 16"x16" floor tom complete the package. No hardware is included in the shellpack price other than the ball

and socket holder and clamp for the rack tom, and legs for the floor tom. A further shellpack option is the same snare/tom/floor tom grouped with monstrous 24"x20" bass drum. This kit could be referred to as the nuclear option...

The Saturn shells are a thin 5.1mm and are six plies thick across the kit. The two walnut plies form the outer and inner layers of each drum, effectively sandwiching the four bands of maple between them. The influence that the walnut has on the sound is profound – more of which later.

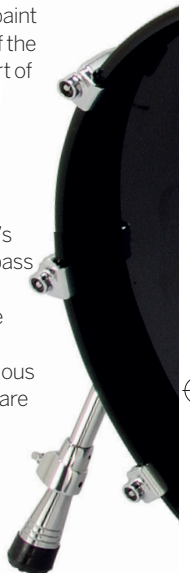
The drums are all sealed beneath a choice of lacquer finishes, including four new sparkles which are exclusive to the Saturn series. The review kit wears a distinctly green example known as Green Appleburst. The other options are Electric Berryburst (purple pink), Galaxyburst (silvery grey) and Root Beerburst (dark maroon). While the eccentric names are in keeping with the

West Coast initials of the kit's title, they should not distract from how good the lacquers look (if the Green Appleburst is anything to go by). Modern spraying techniques allow much larger flakes of metal to be buried within the paint than used to be possible. Bigger flakes of paint mean more light reflected back out of the lacquer, and the effect is nothing short of stunning. Inside the shells, the unmistakable purplish hue of walnut meets the eye.

Running rings

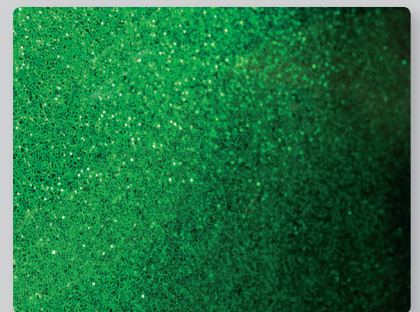
The drums are furnished with Mapex's customary low-mass lugs. Both the bass drum and the snare drum have been allotted 10 per head, which is what we have come to expect on most professional level kits. Mapex's ingenious ITS system, in which lug fixing points are shared by other hardware, therefore saving extra drilling of the shell, is also used across all of the drums with the exception of the snare.

On the rack tom, for instance, the socket for the tom arm is attached to a metal bracket that is fixed across a pair of adjacent lugs. Each of the sockets for the floor tom legs is similarly located by the same method. Whether or not the 'doubling up' of lug fixing points with extra hardware in this manner puts extra stress on the area of shell around each one, or results in more tension having to be dialled into the



The LA Saturn
 kit is essentially a Saturn with a set of radical upgrades.

KEY FEATURES



FRUITY BURST

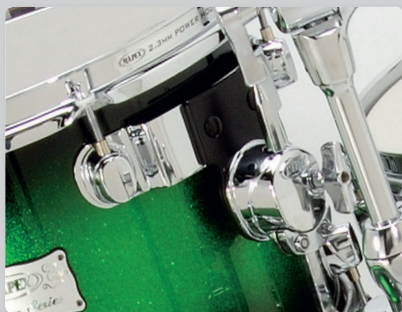
Four impressive sparkle finishes were introduced exclusively for the Saturn LA kits, including Green Appleburst.



Large flakes of paint in
the finish means it looks
stunning under stage lights.

Both of the Saturn LA kits
available feature super
deep 20" long bass drums.

New heavy duty
inset claws are a
welcome upgrade
on the bass drum.



HOLE-FREE DRUMMING
Mapex's ITS mounting system ensures
that the only holes in the shell are those
drilled for the lugs.



BEST OF BOTH
Saturn Series drums are made from a
unique combination of maple and walnut
that brings out the best of both woods.



UP TO THE CHALLENGE
The hefty 14"x7" can measure
up to the beefy bass drum –
which is no mean feat.

GEARREVIEWS

This kit has attitude, not to mention power.



tuning rods that meet the affected lugs (because the shell is being pulled in a different direction), is open to speculation. To my mind, the system seems a clever solution, which neatly avoids excessive drilling of the shells. This can surely only be a good thing?

The spurs on the bass drum are also attached to the shell using the same ITS system. A welcome upgrade on the bass drum is the new heavy duty, inset claws, which are far more substantial than their predecessors.

Wall to walnut sound

Remo heads are fitted across the kit. Mapex's 2.3mm Powerhoops are found on the toms and snare, while the bass drum sports matching wooden hoops. Inevitably, it was the bass drum that I began playing first, before any of the other drums were even out of their boxes – I wasn't disappointed. The characteristic low-end response of walnut, in conjunction with the drum's turbo-sized length gives it a spectacular, ceiling-trembling presence. It is awash with the deepest, juiciest bottom-end and seems capable of carrying effortlessly across the loudest of backlines. With no dampening at all the drum was surprisingly controlled, with far fewer of the overtones than I expected being audible. Adding dampening brought pleasing focus to the kick without sacrificing richness. Tuning was almost irrelevant – at pretty much any tension it sounded like a depth charge going off. What the 24" diameter drum must sound like can only be imagined – it could probably penetrate a lead-lined bunker.

With such a huge kick to contend with Mapex has sensibly equipped the kit with a 14"x7" snare drum. The snare measures up to the kick, delivering a scything crack at the flick of a wrist. Beneath the penetrating opening lies the sort of gritty crunch that a deeper shell engenders. It proved versatile over a good range of tunings, fattening up deliciously when tuned lower while switching to a more funky attack when tuned up. Response is superb across the head and the drum is more than capable of the level of volume required to match the kick, particularly where rim shots are concerned.

The qualities of the walnut are again apparent in the tom and floor tom. They possess a muscular punch in which the deeper frequencies are emphasised, but not at the expense of cleanness or resonance. Without overlooking the contribution of the maple (it makes up two thirds of the shells, after all), the addition of walnut encourages a near-perfect balance of warmth and dark, aggressive tonality throughout the kit. **R**

RHYTHM VERDICT

Mapex's decision to apply the LA blueprint to Saturn-shelled drums is one of the most appropriate matches of shell materials and dimensions that I've come across. The added ingredient of walnut gives the Saturn series drums a unique voice, which the kit's sizes intensify further. The drums ooze power, warmth and authority. This is a kit for red-blooded players used to performing in demanding environments, so it's not ideal for those seeking quietness and dynamics. That said, it's a fabulous package that does the job for which it was intended.



Loud and proud kit that delivers a great quality of sound and has great looks.



Not so easy to play quietly and the long bass drum is not the most practical to cart around.

RATING

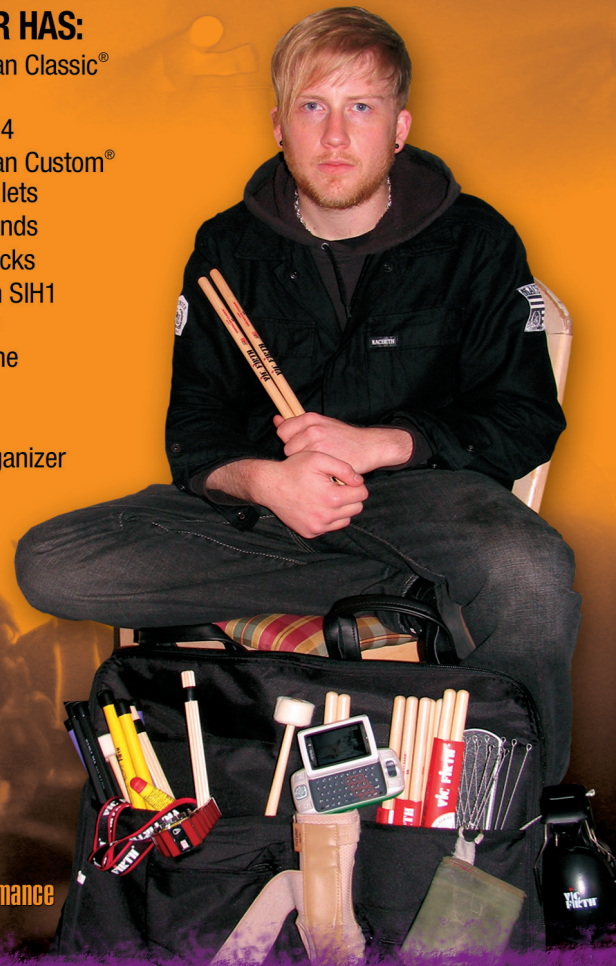


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- 1 pair American Custom® Timpani mallets
- 2 pair Tala Wands
- 1 pair Dreadlocks
- 1 pair Vic Firth SIH1 headphones
- 1 pair Handtone
- 1 arm brace
- 1 lip balm
- 1 personal organizer
- and...

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