



ROLAND TDW-20 EXPANSION CARD

ESSENTIAL SPEC



PRICE

£349

SOUNDS

360

KITS

50

EFFECTS

25 new ambience algorithms

FEATURES

Kit Resonance, improved Snare Buzz dynamics, new Mic Positions, Add Sound feature on snare and hi-hat, improved V Hi-Hat dynamic performance

CONTACT

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£349 The new TDW-20 expansion card is designed to elevate Roland's excellent TD-20 even higher. Jordan McLachlan delves into the brain to find out more

Roland has always been good at offering post-purchase expansion of its hardware products. And while it's the studio synth SRX cards that tend to have assumed minor classic status, the Big R hasn't neglected drummers along the way.

The TDW-20 is the latest V-Drum expansion card, designed to improve on the already rather ace flagship TD-20. An array of 50 new kits, new ambient types, improved dynamics and functions are amongst the trumpeted highlights for V-Drum fans.

Hands On

Installation of the TDW-20 (which is exclusive to the TD-20 and won't fit in other modules) is a breeze, simply involving the removal of the TD-20's backplate, fitting the card into its obvious slot and using the supplied CompactFlash card to update the brain. On restarting the module you find that the first 50 kit presets are the all-new 'expanded' selection, with original kits now in the subsequent 50.

Inevitably, although the TDW-20 has operational and functional cleverness to offer, it's with the new kits that most buyers will first

get acquainted with the card. There are more than 300 new sounds in the TDW-20, split between acoustic and electronic types - fans of vintage emulations as well as 'studio friendly' recording kits and squelchy, bleepy fun are all well catered for.

I've always been a fan of Roland's 'standard' acoustic kit presets and the new ControlRoom kit on the TDW-20 is as good as any so far. Clean, snappy snare tone and truly responsive toms characterise one of the instant highlights of the card for me.

A good deal of effort has evidently gone into methods of making the kits themselves feel more like the real thing. A new Kit Resonance feature adds subtle overtones from each of the component parts of a kit and snare buzz (which can be added to toms/kick etc for added realism) dynamics are improved for a more organic response. The generally higher sound resolution of the TDW-20 also has an impact on the dynamics of the set-up as a whole - the already impressive dynamic interval control of the TD-20 (which avoids the machine-gunning effect of fast snare and cymbal strokes etc) is taken a shade further. And in general the response from acoustic kits is smoother and more lifelike than the original TD-20.

These commendable improvements are not night-and-day transformations, so TD-20 owners who find the TDW-20 beyond them shouldn't despair - its existence doesn't

render your un-expanded kit redundant. But the upgrades are noticeable and welcome.

Even more ear-catching are the new ambience settings with 15 new Room Types - from recording booths to sports arenas - and new Wall Types and Mic Positions that allow real, from-the-ground-up tailoring of an overall kit sound. The new introductions are classy, well-conceived sonic enhancements.

There's useful new functionality here too. Drum kits stored on the CompactFlash card can now be played directly from the card without loading them into the brain; snare strainer, ambience and multi-effects can all be switched on and off with a footswitch or pad; beads can be added to cymbal sounds and the length and number of strips chosen for optimum 'sizzle'; and a new copying option facilitates copying individual, or groups of, instruments between kit presets.

Verdict

For some the notion of splashing £300-odd on an expansion card for an already pricey electronic kit will be unthinkable. But for a small percentage of the TD-20s initial purchase price you get a 100% increase in onboard kit sounds. The new kits are largely excellent and the additional 'real feel' features can be exploited to great effect in the studio. So, is it worth the outlay? If you're keen to get the utmost from the greatest electronic kit ever, it's a resounding yes. **R**

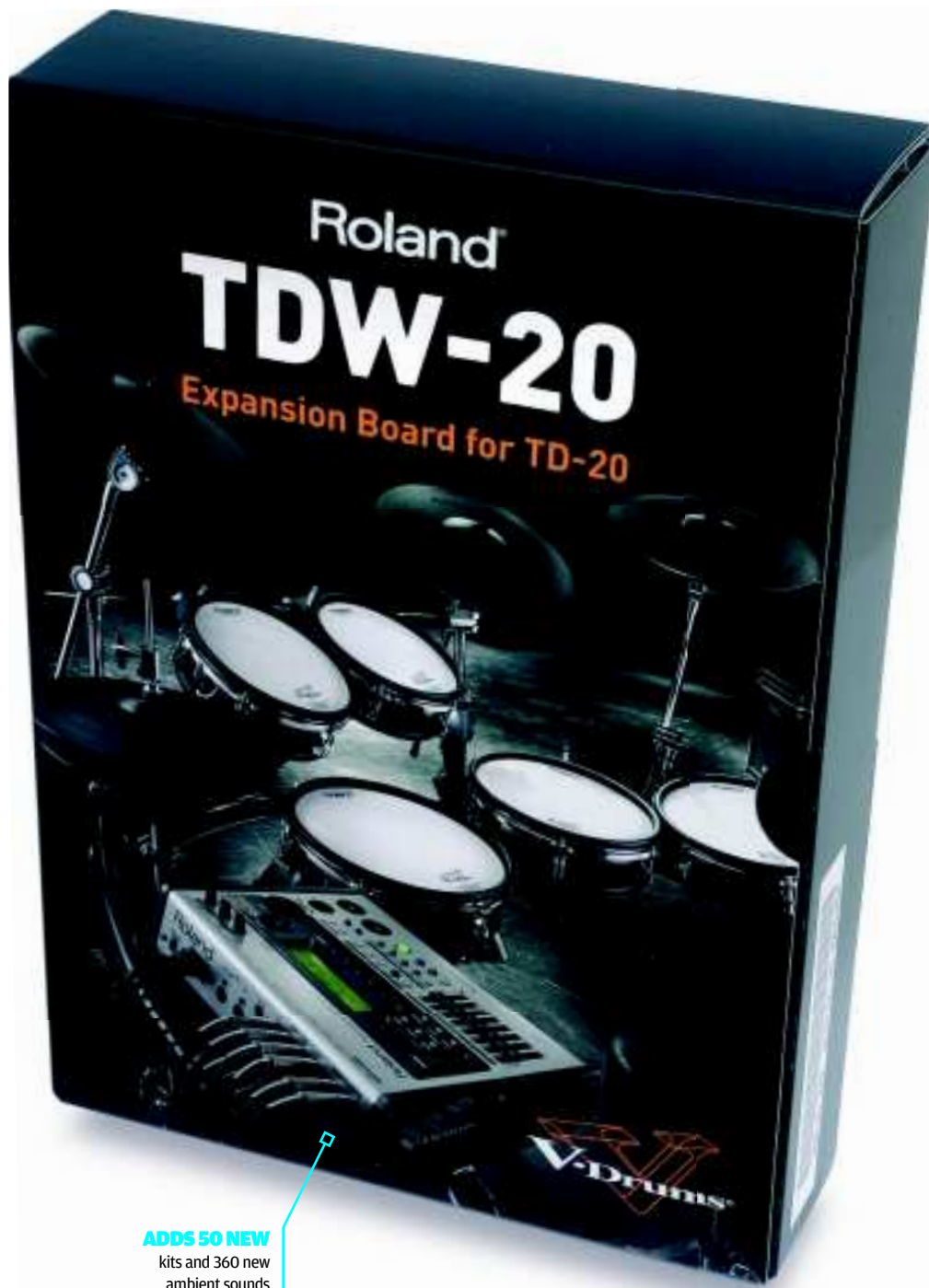
Rating ★★★★★

REMOVE THE
TD-20s backplate and
fit the expansion card

UPDATE THE
brain with the
CompactFlash card

REMEMBER
the TDW-20 only fits
into the TD-20 model





ADDS 50 NEW
kits and 360 new
ambient sounds

TRY IT WITH...



A ROLAND TD-20
- the TDW-20 won't work in anything else, so don't try hammering it into your TD-3



A GREAT PAIR
of headphones, to really enjoy the Kit Resonance and Snare Buzz realism

A good deal of effort has evidently gone in to methods of making the kits themselves feel more like the real thing

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