

# NEW GEAR

**EXCLUSIVE**

**While the kit's look suggests old school, the build quality, hardware and choice of heads is very much 21st Century**

**MODELLED ON GRETSCH'S**

USA Custom drums, the kit sells for roughly a quarter of the amount

**COMPLEMENTING THE**  
vintage-look finish are the  
standard-length depths

**HARDWARE COMPONENTS**  
are of a high standard and  
reassuringly solid



# GRETSCH RENOWN MAPLE DRUM KIT

**£1,179** The Renown Maple kit combines classic and modern in an impressive mid-range package, says Adam Jones

**TOMS CUT THROUGH**  
with ease while producing rich, fat notes

**BASS DRUM'S SHORTER**  
length promotes quicker interaction between batter and front heads

**G**retsch's remarkable history has seen it making drums in three different centuries. Founded in the late 19th Century, the company celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2008. Over the years, countless drumming greats have plied their trade behind a Gretsch kit and current endorsees include players of the calibre of Vinne Colaiuta and Stanton Moore.

While Gretsch's high-end drums are amongst the best in the world, the Renown Maple series is an altogether more affordable Gretsch line that is manufactured in Taiwan.

## Build

Four new Renown Maple kits, which include the stunning example on review, were unveiled at Frankfurt 2010 and are exclusive to European markets. The review kit is a four-piece shellpack made up of a 22"x16" bass drum, 10"x7" and 12"x8" toms and a 14"x14" floor tom. One of the three other kit options combines the same two toms and floor tom with a smaller 20"x14" bass drum. The remaining kits nod towards jazz (18"x14", 12"x8" and 14"x14") and rock (24"x16", 13"x9" and 16"x14"). In order to keep the kits competitive, none of the shellpacks are supplied with a snare, but individual Renown Maple snares are available as add-ons.

Gretsch makes quite a few of its non-premium drums in Taiwan, including its highly rated Modern Classic range. Originally

launched in 2002, Renown Maple drums were designed as cheaper alternatives to Gretsch's flagship USA Custom range and, as far as possible, mirror the spec level and manufacturing process.

With the word 'maple' featuring so prominently in the name, you'd expect it to share a similarly high profile in the shells and indeed the shells are 100 percent quality North American rock maple. Renown Maple drums actually contain a higher proportion of maple than the USA Custom drums they are modelled on. Stateside Gretsch drums are made largely, but not entirely, of maple - within the shells are a couple of plies of something else. The maple that goes into Renown Maple drums is sourced from both the USA and Canada. All drums share a common construction of six plies apiece, with the exception of the optional snare drums which feature 10 plies.

The drums' other details continue to match the USA Custom blueprint. Bearing edges are cut at Gretsch's standard 30° while the company's famous Silver Sealer coats the inside of the shells. The die-cast hoops and GTS tom suspension mounts are identical to those found on higher-range Gretsch drums. Only the lugs diverge in any meaningful way and that is by a small margin. The distinction is in the three faint scorelines etched lengthways into each bullet-shaped lug.

Across the drums, the other hardware

## From the Horse's Mouth!

**Nik Williams** Divisional Sales Manager, Percussion, Fender Great Britain & Ireland

### Where did the idea come from?

"We wanted to give customers who aspired to Gretsch USA Custom an affordable but similarly specified and sounding kit. We really wanted to give the kit a look of something that you would see from Gretsch at a much higher price-point."

### Why did you opt for standard sizes on the kit?

"For us, they just have more to give. We have seen bass drums getting deeper and deeper over recent years, and that's something Gretsch has

embraced on other products, but deep bass drums tend to be really good at making that really deep sound, and not much else. You can get that sound from a shallower drum by using the right heads and dampening, but you can also get that open, warm tone that Gretsch has always been synonymous with too."

### The feature count is high...

"We took all the things we have learned from the production of drums in the USA for over 125 years and applied them here. If we change any of the things in



Nik Williams

that formula they will lose their identity as Gretsch. Everyone is really proud of our history and helping to shape the modern drumset. Things many people take for granted were pioneered by Gretsch, such as die-cast hoops and using ply construction to make shells. I hope we've given drummers something a bit different at this price-point."



# GRETSCH RENOWN MAPLE DRUM KIT



**FAB SILVER OYSTER**  
Pearl Wrap and standard sizes all round the kit add to the classic look and feel.



**SIX-PLY ALL-MAPLE**  
shells feature rounded 30° bearing edges for greater head contact and warm tones.



**LUGS DIVERGE FROM**  
higher-range Gretsch drums only by a small margin - the distinction is in three faint scorelines etched into each lug.

## ESSENTIAL SPEC



### PRICE

Gretsch Renown Maple RN-E624-SOP four-piece shellpack in Silver Oyster Pearl, £1,179  
Optional snare drums: 14"x5½", £222; 14"x6½", £245

### SHELL MATERIAL

Maple

### CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Ply: six plies

### BEARING EDGES

30°

### FINISHES AVAILABLE

Delmar wraps: Silver Oyster Pearl (pictured) & Blue Sparkle; Lacquers: Piano White & Dark Walnut

### SHELLS

Toms: 8"x7", 10"x7", 12"x8" & 13"x9"; floor toms: 14"x14", 16"x16" & 18"x16"; bass drums: 18"x14", 20"x14", 22"x16", 22"x18" & 24"x16"

### SUPPLIED HEADS

Toms: Evans G2 clear batter & generic clear resonant; bass drum: Evans EMAD clear batter & Gretsch textured white front head

### LUGS PER DRUM

10" & 12" toms: 5; 14" floor tom: 8; bass drum: 10

### TOM MOUNTS

Gretsch GTS suspension mounts, stand-mounted

### CONTACT

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components are of an equally high standard, with the floor tom clamps and legs being pro level while the bass drum claws and spurs are reassuringly solid. There is no scrimping on heads either as the kit comes fitted with a full complement of Evans batter heads.

## Hands On

The four new finishes are divided into two lacquer options (Piano White, Dark Walnut) and two wraps (Silver Oyster Pearl, Blue Sparkle). Both wraps are supplied by Delmar, recognised as the best wrap producer in the world. And with good reason: the retro-chic Silver Oyster Pearl wrap of the review kit looks even better in the flesh than it does in the pictures. While the pattern has an air of familiarity about it, Gretsch has been canny enough to ensure it is not only unique but also exclusive to the Renown Maple range.

Complementing the vintage-look finish are the drum depths, which are all standard lengths. In an era of super-long bass drums it's particularly pleasing to find a 16" deep bass drum. Aside from its chunky spurs and claws, the kick's biggest concession to modernity would seem to be its undrilled status. Appearances can be deceptive though; while everything about the kit's look suggests old school, the build quality, standard of hardware and choice of heads is very much 21st Century. In the case of the kick drum, the Evans EMAD batter head brings serious depth

and punchy drum. Any decay is cut off cleanly due to the integral EMAD foam ring, making further damping unnecessary. Removing the damping ring from the head allows the decay to ring on a little longer, but not by a massive amount. The note rises as tension is dialled into the tuning rods, but the tight, focused nature of the sound remains. EMAD heads are designed to be on the dry side, so to get a proper vintage-style 'bonk' requires a change of head to something thinner and more open-sounding. Still, retro looks coupled with a modern sound will be right up many a player's street.

## Sound quality and build standard of the kit will appeal to and cope with the energy levels of younger drummers

The toms are much in the same vein. Thin

all-maple shells cut with rounded 30° bearing edges are likely to be warm and resonant, while die-cast rims tend to sharpen the sound. In the middle of these two influences are the heads themselves - twin-ply Evans G2 batters - which give a thick, wet sound with plenty of attack. Like the bass drum, the toms deliver a decidedly modern performance, cutting through with ease while producing rich, fat notes. Swapping the G2 heads for single-ply coated versions reveals a different side to the toms. The level of attack recedes - but doesn't disappear, thanks to the hoops - while the warmth increases. Cranking up the tuning transforms the toms' sound into one that is authentically vintage - clean, woody and ringing.

## Verdict

Gretsch has come up with a kit that combines classic looks with the sort of sound quality and build standard that will both appeal to and cope with the energy levels of younger drummers. For the price-point it's well equipped and has the added lustre of the brand's heritage. An equivalent Gretsch USA Custom kit is four times as expensive and, while the Renown Maple is not going to match it for sheer finesse, it's nonetheless a pretty versatile set of drums. To this end, the peerless Vinnie and *Rhythm* favourites John Jenkins and Karl Brazil have all been spotted behind Renown kits. **R**

**Rating** ★★★★★

## TRY IT WITH...



**A GIBRALTAR**  
Stealth Rack's discreet presence will maximise the view of the kit.



**DUO-FINISH**  
Bosphorus Antique cymbals combine a similar level of versatility and affordability.



**GROOVE ALCHEMY**  
Get the funk with Gretsch endorsee Stanton Moore's latest DVD.

