

PEARL WOOD FIBERGLASS KIT WITH HYBRID EXOTIC SNARE

From £599 Pearl resurrects an old favourite from the 1970s. Geoff Nicholls dusts off the flares and gets bashing

WORDS: GEOFF NICHOLLS

Pearl's fibreglass and wood/fibreglass-shell kits of the early 1970s were cutting edge and successful. At a time when amplification was still relatively crude, the loud fibreglass drums were handy. In the spirit pervading the whole industry today, Pearl has decided now is a good time to revamp those fondly remembered kits.

The run is limited, and by restricting the shell-pack options and colours (in a similar way to the BCX, reviewed in October 2014)

poplar wood. It should look smart under lights though.

That leaves just one other size/colour option which is the classic 24"x14", 13"x9", 16"x16" shell-pack in White Marine Pearl wrap.

Inside the toms you find the thick dark Kapur rising via a smooth 45° shelf to the sharp bearing edge, which sits astride the twin outer plies of poplar. Leaving the briefest of counter cuts to the outer shell. The edges are level and of an exceptionally

drum, but Pearl has released a suitable partner as pictured here. This is the new 14"x6½" Hybrid Exotic snare which has 100 percent 6-ply 7.5mm Kapur (ie: no poplar) shell, but with the same fibreglass lining.

There are 14"x5" and 14"x8" alternatives and the Hybrid Exotic Series also includes drums with shells of Cast Aluminium and 'VectorCast' (spun composite filament and resin thread).

Although the snare doesn't match in colour - it's a rich Ebony Lacquer with a pearl inlay - the contrast works well. It's pricier, but you get a lot for your money. **>**

MAYBE IT WAS THE WAY THEY HAD BEEN TUNED PRETTY LOW, BUT THE FAT SLAPPY ATTACK TOOK ME RIGHT BACK TO THE 1980S

Pearl again manages to offer a professional set at an upper-budget price. Accompanying the kit, the Hybrid Exotic snare drum is a more complicated instrument and more expensive, as we shall see.

Build

Pearl's 1972 catalogue describes the Artist Series as 3/16" of 100 percent fibreglass and the Professional Series as 9-ply wood with a 1/32" layer of fibreglass on the inside. The 2015 Hybrid-Fiberglass has 7-ply, 7.5mm-thick shells, made up of two outer plies of poplar, encircling six plies of dark, hard Kapur wood, lined inside with a thin fibreglass mesh.

The review kit, which is 22"x16", 10"x7", 12"x8" and 16"x14", is offered in two colour options - the rich and interestingly grained Satin Cocoa Burst, or the Platinum Mist (seen here), which I found rather anaemic due to the absence of figured grain in the outer

high standard as we expect from Pearl. The bass drum edges are rounded rather than sharp.

As is standard with Pearl, the insides reveal a long scarf joint, a refreshing change from the butt joins of most other manufacturers. The fibreglass is just the thinnest mesh lining, sort of like a glued net curtain, leaving a hard but textured feel.

The hardware utilises tried-and-tested Pearl staples. There are gleamingly chromed lugs and bolts and thick black isolating gaskets everywhere and 2mm triple-flanged rims stamped with the legend 'Pearl Superhoop'. The two small toms have four-point secured OptiMount brackets which are super-stable, but don't half bunk up the weight. Shame Pearl didn't go wholly retro and dig out the classic 1970s bass drum mounts and posts.

There is no equivalent bargain snare



Watch our Pearl Wood Fibreglass video demo at <http://bit.ly/pearlfiberglass>

HYBRID SHELLS

Toms and bass drum shells are a 7.5mm-thick hybrid of 4-ply Kapur, 2-ply poplar and a thin lining of fibreglass



Essential spec



PRICES

Four-shell pack, £1,050; 14"x6½" Hybrid Exotic, Kapur/fibreglass snare, £599

SHELL MATERIALS

Wood and fibreglass

CONSTRUCTION

Hybrid ply, scarf jointed

PLIES

7-ply, 7.5mm thick: 2 x poplar/4 x Kapur /1 x fibreglass

BEARING EDGES

Toms and snare: sharp 45° edge; bass drum: fully-rounded edge

FINISHES

Kit: Reference/Masterworks High Gloss and Satin Lacquer finishes in Platinum Mist (as pictured), or Satin Cocoa Burst, plus White Marine Pearl; snare: Ebony Lacquer with Pearl Inlay (as pictured)

HOOPS

Pearl 2mm triple-flanged Superhoop II

SHELLS

Four shell pack (pictured): 22"x16", 10"x7", 12"x8", 16"x14"; three shell pack: 24"x14", 13"x9", 16"x16"; snares: 14"x5", 14"x6½", 14"x8"

SUPPLIED HEADS

Toms: Remo Clear Pinstripe batter; Clear Ambassador resonant; bass: Powerstroke-3 Coated/Clear batter; snare: Coated Ambassador batter

LUGS PER DRUM

Bass: 20 RL lugs; toms: 12 and 16 RL lugs; snare: 20 STL-100 lugs

TOM MOUNTS

Pearl Opti-Mount Suspension System

SNARE STRAINER

SR-1000 strainer & butt

SNARE WIRES

SN1420D 20 steel coil snare wires

CONTACT

Pearl Drums
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HYBRID EXOTIC

The 14"x6½" Hybrid Exotic snare is finished in Ebony Lacquer and with a Pearl inlay and has Spin-Tight lug bolts

FINISHES

Platinum Mist is one of only three available kit finishes, the others being Satin Cocoa Burst and White Marine Pearl

GEAR REVIEW

They say...

Jeroen Breider *European Branding Manager for Pearl Music Europe*



The price is cool for a high-end kit. How does Pearl do this?

"One reason is by restricting the colour options. In Europe we are only doing three colours. There are just two configurations and we are not offering separate toms. Also, this is a limited edition for 2015. The numbers we are making are not too high because the fibreglass is hand-applied and labour intensive. Although demand is almost more than we can deliver, so we may extend it into 2016!"

Why now?

"We looked into how we might do a revival of some of the Pearl legacy. We are also reintroducing our Crystal Beat (acrylic) kit from the same era. Other manufacturers are doing this also. It's strange we all have the same idea at the same time! We wanted to make something now to reintroduce it and make it affordable to everyone."

The snare drum is much more expensive.

"That's because it's a whole different beast. We introduced that last year in the Hybrid Exotic range, which are very special snare drums."



PINSTripES

Toms are fitted with Clear Pinstripes – another period touch

There's the snazzy SR-1000 snare strainer and butt for starters. Plus 20 STL-100 button lugs with Spin-Tight tension bolts. The latter have an internal locking expansion rod which prevents the bolt working loose with heavy rim-shooting once you have tensioned it to the desired pitch. If you look closely at the square end of the tension rod there is a red-topped Allen-key operated insert. Of all the many solutions to loss of tension this may be the most elegant. Just don't lose your special tension key.

The SR-100 snare throw-off and strainer

IF YOU WANT A LOUD YET FOCUSED KIT, THIS IS A GOOD CHOICE, AND THAT FOCUS ALSO GIVES IT SENSITIVITY – IT'S SHARP AND REFINED

has a chubby build with the securest of lock-over levers, complete with locking button. Snare wire tension is adjusted from the butt-end which also has a locking nut. It's all heavy-duty, yet doesn't feel excessive, rather it is smoothly effective and reassuring.

Hands On

The toms came fitted with Clear Pinstripes (another period touch) which seem to be just the ticket. Maybe it was the way they had been tuned pretty low, but the fat slappy attack took me right back to the 1980s. Dark with a thick assault plus a rich and deep tone. On all the toms this richness

seemed to result from the successful marriage of the clarity and sharp edge provided by the hardened fibreglass, with the added warm and deep timbral complexity of the Kapur.

However, with the bass drum this did not seem to work out so well. My favoured descriptions of powerful bass drum sounds usually involve 'blam', 'slam' or 'thud'. This one is a thud – there's a hard edge that makes it sharp in the attack. I stood just in front and got someone to stamp on it once as hard as possible and it really was a

cannon blast. If I wore a toupee it would be sailing in the wind. Really, it was quite a shock.

What was missing though was much sense of tone or sustain – the sound was a relatively short smack. The properties of clarity and punch are exaggerated for sure, but it felt slightly bland. The sort of comment that is sometimes levelled against synthetic drums.

Some joy was had by tuning the batter to just above wrinkles and then progressively tightening the front head to increase the resonance. Then the drum became more characterful, but I was still left with a nagging frustration – where the toms had

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2 TEMPUS FIBREGLOSS SNARE DRUM

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the punch and clarity but with added dark timbre, the bass drum, being so much bigger, had the former and not the latter. Not enough flavour of Kapur. If I had a spare Pinstripe I should try that, as on the toms, instead of the ubiquitous Powerstroke-3.

Anyway, I don't want to make too much of this. If you want a loud yet focused kit, this is a good choice. And that focus also gives it sensitivity – it's sharp and refined. Your head choice and tuning will make a big difference though.

As for the snare drum, it's splendid. The hard fibreglass lining gives it an extra sharpness, precision and sensitivity which are all pluses for your snare work. The 100 percent Kapur gives it warmth and flavour. Throw-off and butt tensioner are superbly engineered and easy to manipulate. Those Spin-Tight lugs seem to work fine. I wasn't in a position to thrash 10 shades of hell out of the drum, to find just how much brutality it takes to loosen them, but I suspect it's enough to satisfy most head-bangers. **R**

VERDICT: Pearl's original Wood-Fibreglass shell was a genuine classic and this excellent, timely update with Kapur shells comes at a knock-down price. Stunningly clear and punchy, grab one while you can.

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★
PLAYABILITY ★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★
RHYTHM RATING ★★★★★