

Zildjian

K Session Custom Cymbals

£354 | Zildjian wrings more mileage out of its classy K Custom range. **Geoff Nicholls** tries out a couple of contrasting newcomers.

ESSENTIALS



PRICES

20" K Custom
Session ride **£354**
13" K Custom
Special Dry
hi-hats, pair **£410**

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The sound

Sitting behind a cymbal you hear a different sound from that which ends up in the audience or on a finished record.

by a cracked cymbal, it is neither too dark nor too dry.

The K designation traditionally indicates a darker and warmer sound, not so brash and loud perhaps as Zildjian's As or Zs. K Custom cymbals are a 'contemporary expression' of the K sound, with drier but still complex sounds.

The 20" K Custom Session ride is an unlathed, medium thin cymbal in a brilliant finish, featuring crater-like hammerings and a smooth bell. It's a larger version of the previous 18" ride, which was developed in conjunction with Zildjian's prize champion Steve Gadd. Gadd has often preferred an almost perversely dry cymbal sound, to the point he would play an old favourite cracked 18" ride. In his hands it worked, and the sound of that cracked cymbal became the inspiration for the 18" Custom Session ride.

You'd expect then an extremely dry – virtually dead, even – cymbal, but that's not what I found. The cymbal was anything but dull. It was brighter and fuller than anticipated. But maybe that's the idea? After all, sitting behind a cymbal, you hear a different sound to the audience or what ends up on a finished record, where overtones are buried in the overall band sound. Maybe the audience hears a more Gadd-like sound than the player? What did remind me of Gadd was the wonderfully distinct stick sound. When the band is roaring away, you can still hear every ride stroke. This clarity extends to the quite raw and bright bell.

Although the cymbal is designated 'session' I found it worked great live. In fact I think it would suit many different types of player, reflecting Gadd's legendary versatility. Although it is medium thin and sonically inspired

Top hats

These are also an addition to a previously available model, the 14" Special Dry hats. In contrast to the Custom ride, the hats are rough looking with a dark brownish top, heavy lathing and pronounced circular crater hammerings. Also unlike the ride, the bell is lathed rather than smooth.

The top cymbal is medium-thin and is paired with a slightly heavier, medium weight bottom. This time I found the sound too dry at first. In fact, my immediate reaction was the hats were so dry they lacked flavour and warmth. But I soon realised they were sharp and crisp, suiting them to miking and recording. Being 13" they have a slightly higher pitch than standard 14" hats, but since they're relatively light they are also fairly dark in timbre. The thin-ish top cymbal means they don't sustain as much as heavier hi-hats when opened up. The result is a clean, short-ish wash and a concise pedalled 'chick'. **R**

RHYTHM VERDICT

The magic letter 'K' always bestows a mysterious quality and these latest cymbals are not quite what you'd expect. Regarding the 20" ride, I don't see how you can replicate the sound of a cracked cymbal except by cracking it. This is a versatile and subtle ride with a particularly clear stick response. As for the hats – they also fared well live since, although dry and not the most powerful cymbals, they seemed to occupy a frequency where they cut through without being raucous. An unexpected outcome and a welcome surprise.



Distinctive, characterful and classy, occupying particular niches for discerning players



Hi-hats may be too dry and lacking in power for some styles

RATING

