

NEW
GEAR



THE ROUGH-HEWN FINISH
brings a dark, intense tonality to the hats' sound

ESSENTIAL SPEC



PRICE

£426

**CAST OR
PRESSED**

Cast
ALLOY USED

B20
FINISH

Raw
**HAND OR
MACHINE
HAMMERED**

Hand-guided
**COUNTRY OF
MANUFACTURE**

Canada
**DIAMETERS
AVAILABLE**

13" only
**MODELS
AVAILABLE**

Hi-hats only
SUITABLE FOR

Rock, pop, dance,
drum and bass,
industrial, metal,
hybrid genres

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SABIAN VAULT FIERCE HATS

£426 Inspired by and developed with the input of Jojo Mayer, do Sabian's beasts live up to their name? Adam Jones finds out

Sabian's Vault Fierce Hats were announced at the 2008 NAMM back in January, but it wasn't until the Frankfurt music show later in the year that they were unveiled. The hi-hats are the latest cymbals to emerge under the Jojo Mayer-endorsed Fierce brand, joining a ride and a set of crashes.

Though the word 'unique' is banded around all too often, it is a term that can be used genuinely to describe Jojo Mayer. Initially cutting his teeth as a jazz sideman (backing legends such as Monty Alexander, Dizzy Gillespie and Nina Simone in the process) he is better known nowadays for his edgy electronica work - as a drummer, writer and producer - and his notoriously inspirational clinics.

Build

Like the Fierce ride and crashes that preceded them, the hi-hats are, in essence, signature cymbals. The Vault designation is due to Sabian's new marketing policy of grouping all its signature models under the Vault banner.

Considering Jojo's playing attributes, it's no surprise to find that the hi-hats are available in a 13" diameter only. Rumour has it that

Sabian and Mr Mayer are working on a pair of 10" Fierce hats, which would again make perfect sense in his territory.

Individually cast from B20 alloy, the hi-hats bear multiple deep hammer marks and are completely unlathed. Though the cymbals have been cleaned to remove surplus tin oxide, the finish could only be described as raw, with character-enhancing variations in hue spread across each of the cymbals in random patterns.

Rawness features prominently on Jojo's existing Fierce cymbals so it's safe to say that he's not the sort of player who likes to view his own reflection in his cymbals. As much as the rough-hewn finish might be interpreted as a visual metaphor stating that the Fierce line of cymbals is not a vanity project, its inclusion is more about the influence on the sound that it brings, namely a dark, intense tonality.

Hands on

The hats are paired as a medium-heavy bottom and a medium-thin top, which sees them tipping the scales at nearly 2½ kilos. This density is very apparent when handling the cymbals. First impressions of the hats are of a blend of dry, complex tones and an

aggressive presence. Sticking is reproduced precisely, especially fast patterns played with the tips, and is projected with no little force. Playing into the hats further results in a dramatic increase in volume. I found that the harder I played the louder they got. The warm, slightly trashy tone remains throughout all the dynamic levels, but the overriding characteristic of the hats is sheer power. In a word: ferocious.

Verdict

If ever a product was appropriately named, it's these Fierce Hats. They are one of the loudest pairs of 13" hi-hats I've ever encountered (to the degree that they eclipsed my own 14" hats by some distance). Jojo Mayer's jazzy roots are reflected in their complex tonality, and the fact that such warmth can be conveyed so assertively is quite a feat.

However, the unquestionable bite they possess inevitably reduces their versatility somewhat by making them overpowering in quieter or acoustic environments. Cymbals of this quality don't come cheap either, and as such the Fierce Hats carry a distinctly premium price. **R**

Rating **★★★★☆**

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