

# ZILDJIAN K CUSTOM SPECIAL DRY CYMBALS

**From £155** Zildjian remasters its Special Dry collection for the modern market

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**W**hen Zildjian released its original K Custom Special Dry range back in 2003, despite some success with the Special Dry ride in particular, the unique style didn't seem to catch on in a big way with drummers. In more recent years, however, Meinl has had considerable success with the popularity of its Byzance Extra Dry series, with drummers including Benny Greb and Anika Nilles leading the movement. Now, using the slogan 'Dry Done Right', Zildjian has revealed its newly remastered and expanded Special Dry range under the K Custom umbrella.

## Build

The Special Dry range is made up of a total of 17 models, which can be broken down into 13", 14" and 15" hi-hats (with bottom and top cymbals also available individually), 16", 18", 19", 20" and 22" crashes, 17", 18", 19" and 21" Trash crashes, 21" and 23" rides, a 10" splash and a 14" FX hi-hat top. We have been provided with a modest assortment of cymbals from that monster collection for the purposes of this review, including the 13" and 14" hi-hats, along with the 14" FX hi-hat top, 17" Trash crash, 18" crash, 18" Trash china and the 21" ride.

Each cymbal is cast from Zildjian's secret 80/20 bronze alloy, hand-hammered and then treated to a unique lathing process. The top surface of each cymbal is left with a natural 'baked on' finish except for small, rustic lathing lines spaced less than a centimetre apart, which run from the edge to just short of the bell. These slightly wavy lines not only assist the tonal characteristics of the cymbals but also lend them a certain quirky visual charm. Some appear so filthy that they even have a green tinge to them in places. Due to this unique finish, no two cymbals will be quite the same; some are very dark in appearance while others appear slightly lighter.

## Also try...



### 1 SABIAN BIG AND UGLY CYMBALS

**We say:** "Don't be misled by the joke name and bizarre finishes. Sabian has produced a stunning and intriguing set of high-end, provocative, challenging, complex, dark and great-to-play cymbals."



### 2 MEINL BYZANCE TRANSITION RIDE

**We say:** "It would be difficult to pigeonhole this cymbal into a particular genre. It is a cymbal with a split personality, easily transitioning from ride to crash and back again, making it highly versatile."



## FX TOP

The 14" hi-hat top produces a filtered, processed sound

Unlike the ride, crash and hi-hats, the Trash crash, Trash china and FX hi-hat top each feature several circular cut-outs across the bow, designed to sharpen the attack and dry out the sound even further. The Trash crash uses a mixture of large and small holes running parallel to each other from bell to edge; arranged in sets of three, four or five. The Trash china uses the same configuration, which leaves both cymbals with almost as much air as actual metal. Noticeably more so, in fact, than Zildjian's similar A Custom or K

EFX cymbals. Interestingly, the Trash china is Zildjian's first Chinese-style cymbal with holes in it.

## Hands On

Starting with the hi-hats; there is not a great deal between the 13" and 14" models except for the obvious, pitch and length. Both have a softness under stick and of course offer a dry and articulate response. Digging right into them is satisfying and they're not particularly loud or cutting so it feels like you

THE STICK DEFINITION IS IMPECCABLY CLEAR WHILE THE CYMBAL STILL MAINTAINS A DECENT LEVEL OF WASH, DESPITE ITS OVERALL DRYNESS



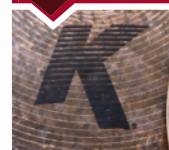
## CRASHES

The crashes range from 16" to a massive 22"

## FINISH

The top surface of each cymbal is left with a natural, 'baked on' finish

## Essential spec



### PRICES

10" splash, £155;  
13" hi-hat (pair), £419;  
13" hi-hat (bottom or top), £245;  
14" hi-hat (pair), £475;  
14" (bottom or top), £238;  
14" FX hi-hat (top), £245;  
15" hi-hat (pair), £509;  
16" crash, £285;  
17" Trash crash, £309;  
18" crash, £335;  
18" Trash China, £345;  
19" crash, £355;  
19" Trash crash, £355;  
20" crash, £379;  
21" ride, £415;  
21" Trash crash, £415;  
22" crash, £449;  
23" ride, £485

### CAST OR PRESSED

Cast

### MACHINE OR HAND HAMMERED

Hand hammered

### COUNTRY OF MANUFACTURE

USA

### MODELS AVAILABLE

Splash: 10";  
Hi-hat pairs: 13", 14", 15"; FX hats: 14" (top only); Crashes: 16", 18", 19", 20", 22"; Trash crashes: 17", 18", 19", 21"; Trash China: 18"; Rides: 21" and 23"

### SUITABILITY

Could work with all styles. Recommended for modern jazz, studio, country and medium rock

### CONTACT

Zildjian  
www.zildjian.com  
Headstock Distribution  
www.headstockdistribution.com

can get away with it. Despite the bark of the open sound, they also possess a warmth which is reminiscent of old school big band recordings, particularly when played in a swing context. The chick of the stepped hi-hat doesn't have lots of volume but still has sufficient impact to cut over the ride and other cymbals.

The 21" ride is a surprisingly versatile thing and plays beautifully. The stick definition is impeccably clear while the cymbal maintains a decent level of wash, despite its overall dryness. It crashes wonderfully, opening up in an instant and shutting back down relatively quickly, a reaction you'd expect from a crash rather than a large ride cymbal. The bell is clear and dark, coaxing out the more complex tonalities from the body of the cymbal with each note. The 18" crash is probably the most dry of the collection, almost vanishing into the

mix as soon as it has been struck. This works well on one hand, giving it an almost pre-mixed or EQ'd sound, although in a live context it takes a bit of getting used to. You really have to embrace 'the dirt' to get on board with this crash, but some players will absolutely love it.

The effects elements of the line-up are where things really start getting experimental. The 17" Trash crash delivers as much of a sting as its look would suggest. Responding instantly and fading out almost as quickly, the cymbal is not only great for accents and quick attack, but also works surprisingly well as a main crash. I found myself favouring its punch over the 18" crash.

The Trash china has all the qualities of any good china cymbal but with the same dryness that eliminates any potential pang. It's super quick and sharp and would work well for heavier styles.

The 14" FX hi-hat top completely transforms the hi-hat into something more akin to a cymbal stack. With a heavily produced, 'filtered' sound, this would work amazingly for electronic music or even hip-hop grooves. Set up as an auxiliary hat though, I was able to find an additional range of interesting sounds suitable for other styles. **R**

**VERDICT:** Zildjian has delivered exactly what it set out to do with this re-vamped range of Special Dry cymbals. Catering for more modern tastes, the cymbals are actually surprisingly versatile.

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