

NEW GEAR

EXCLUSIVE

ESSENTIAL SPEC



PRICES

Tama Starphonic snare drums:
14"x6" nickel-plated brass, £649
14"x6" aluminium, £549

SHELL MATERIAL

Metal: nickel-plated brass/aluminium

CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Welded (brass)/spun (aluminium)

NUMBER OF PLYS

One, 1.6mm thick

BEARING EDGES

45 degrees

HOOPS/RIMS

Tama 1.6mm flanged Grooved Hoop

SHELL AVAILABILITY

14"x6" only

SUPPLIED HEADS

Evans G1 batter and Hazy 300 resonant

LUGS PER DRUM

20 Freedom Lugs joined by tubing to make full-length lugs

SNARE STRAINER

Tama Linear-Drive strainer, chrome-plated

SNARE WIRES

Tama hi-carbon Snappy snare wires (20 strands)

CONTACT

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ABSENCE OF DRILL

holes makes for remarkably strong hoops

CLAW HOOKS ARE

a chunky update of those found on vintage snares

TAMA STARPHONIC SNARES



From £549 With their new Starphonic range, Tama aim to compete with the best snares out there by creating a set of modern, classic drums. Adam Jones judges the results

Starphonic snares were devised in the wake of the success of Tama's Warlord collection of snare drums. While the Warlord snares were universally praised for their sound and uncompromising quality, their looks placed them very firmly in metal *Lord Of The Rings* territory. The new Starphonic drums are Tama's attempt to create a set of modern classic snares with more conventional looks.

A quartet of Starphonic snares was launched at the summer NAMM show consisting of brass, aluminium, maple and bubinga drums, with each model only available in one 14"x6" size. Of the four drums, *Rhythm* was sent the brass and aluminium-shelled examples.

Build

In a nod to classic snare design, the drums feature a single central horizontal bead. Both share an identical 1.2mm shell thickness. The aluminium shell is spun, therefore seamless, while the brass drum is cut from a single sheet of brass and bent into shape before being nickel coated. The shell of the aluminium drum has been simply brushed to a satin lustre. In contrast, the brass drum is polished to a liquid-like gloss. The nickel coating mutes the typical hues of brass to the extent that the shell is only slightly warmer in colour than the chrome-plated lugs and hoops.

Tama is renowned for its engineering prowess, so it's no surprise to find the Starphonic drums bristling with technical innovations. Most noticeable are the Grooved

Hoops which have been developed exclusively for the Starphonic range. Grooved Hoops differ at a fundamental level from normal hoops as they are completely undrilled. At the point where the hoop is angled to flow over the edge of the drum, the fold dips down towards the inside of the shell, forming a groove. Tama's Claw Hooks - a chunky update of those found on vintage snares - do as their name suggests and hook over the side of the hoops, locating firmly in the groove. The tension rods are fed through the Claw Hooks, leaving the hoops untouched by a drill.

The absence of drill holes makes for remarkably strong hoops that, though they are only flanged, have the feel of die-cast hoops. The top of the Grooved Hoops differs as well; rather than curving away from the



THE WEIGHT OF THE brass translates into a bright, hard-edged sound

DRUM IS CUT FROM a single sheet of brass bent into shape and nickel coated

drum they do the opposite and turn inwards. According to Tama, this enhances the natural tone of the drum. This shape is definitely kinder to sticks, so your Pro-Marks won't be reduced to firewood at quite the same rate.

Partnering the Claw Hooks are Tama's Freedom Lugs, two sets of single point lugs that are connected by a length of tubing. The tension rods thread into a bar in each lug which 'floats' in a hollow cavity. This means heads can be changed with only a minimal amount of tension being dialled out of the rods. Once the Claw Hooks have been eased out of the Grooved Hoops the rods can be tilted away from the drum, allowing the hoop to be lifted clear. Leaving the rods attached to the drum means there's no chance of spilling them from the hoop during a head change.

Hands On

Unsurprisingly, the brass drum is heavier than the aluminium model. The choice of metal and its weight translates into a bright, hard-edged sound. To say it's loud is an understatement, as strokes seem to end in detonations. Any energy directed towards the drum appears to be doubled on impact and then flung back

with four times the force. I'm not the hardest hitter but I soon found it dominating a loud backline. It's the kind of drum that would bite the bass player's arse when he wasn't looking.

By comparison the aluminium drum is house trained, but still an absolute belter. Aluminium makes for a naturally drier sound, but if the drum is slightly less cutting it makes up for it with a huge, stadium-sized note. Crisp attack leads to a fat, gutsy core - the classic rock snare sound. There's more to both drums than sheer power. The degree of sensitivity and spectrum of responses is nothing short of exquisite. That said, if you rimshot either on a regular basis you'll need to learn to lip-read...

Verdict

Space permits me from fully describing just how wonderful these drums are. Tama clearly set out to build serious high-end snare drums

It's the kind of drum that would bite the bass player's arse when he wasn't looking

TRY IT WITH...



TAMA'S STAR-CAST

Air-Ride snare stand - effectively a suspension mount attached to a tripod - for maximum resonance.



A HARDCASE

14" snare case to help keep your precious Starphonic snare in pristine condition.

and what it has achieved is close to perfection. They are beautifully made and a pleasure to play, with no crackles, buzzes or dead spots. While I tested both drums with a loud band it should be stressed just how versatile they are. On the strength of their performance I'm itching to hear the two wooden Starphonic models. As with all high-end gear, the price tags are reassuringly expensive. To my ears, though, they represent good value. **R**

Rating ★★★★★