

NEW GEAR

EXCLUSIVE

THE DRUM PADS

are nicely constructed and allow the use of your choice of heads

PADS FEATURE

tensionable heads and a nicely low-profile aesthetic

STRAIGHTFORWARD

rack makes for a very 'instrument-like' feel

'REAL FEEL' IS ALSO

helped by the use of a hi-hat mounted on a regular hi-hat stand



2BOX DRUMIT FIVE

£1,799 The highly anticipated e-drum kit has finally arrived. Jordan McLachlan wonders, does it distinguish itself?

BRAIN IS LOADED WITH 100
factory kits, playalong tracks, USB input,
MIDI in/out and 4Gb of flash memory



Given 2Box's trumpeting of the DrumIt Five's 'open sound nature', I was half expecting the kit to be a little lacking in terms of factory sounds. How wrong I was

Has there been a more eagerly awaited electronic drum kit than 2Box's DrumIt Five? I can't think of one. Of course, many of us look forward to new additions to the Roland, Yamaha, etc line-ups, but the buzz around 2Box in the last couple of years has been on a different level. Internet chatter and speculation led to high expectations for what sections of the e-drum community had convinced themselves would be a revolutionary game-changer of a set-up. Then release dates slipped, leading to further gossip that the DrumIt Five would turn out to be vapourware – promised but never actually realised. But now finally, in all its distinctive Swedish glory, it's here...

Build

Much of the excitement surrounding the DrumIt Five is down to its (self) description as an 'open-sound drum system'. 2Box have designed the kit to enable users to employ whichever heads they prefer – regular or mesh heads will work – and to create and import their own sounds into the DrumIt Five module too. It's a tempting proposition, the chance to really customise a kit to your own peculiar requirements and away from what everyone else is using.

The physical design of the DrumIt Five sets it apart from the crowd too. There's something vaguely 'original iMac' about the combination of orange and brushed metal surfaces – not that everyone approves. I for one absolutely love it and see no reason why the default colour for such things should be black (other than it's what sells because

musicians, as a species, are so remarkably conservative), but opinion is definitely divided if internet banter is anything to go by.

However, there's nothing to complain about as far as pad construction is concerned. A cast aluminium chassis provides a solid base for the pads, which feature tensionable heads and a nicely low-profile aesthetic in the same ballpark as Korg's Wavedrum and Yamaha's DTXtreme III pads. I'm quite comfortable playing an electronic kit that doesn't try and ape the visuals of an acoustic set, so I'm pleased that 2Box have had the courage to come up with something as character-laden as the DrumIt Five.

In terms of triggering, the drum pads feature a main head sensor and independent rim trigger to allow for either realistic acoustic emulations, where rimshots or cross-stick sounds are very much part of the deal, or for separate sounds to be assigned to head and rim. Some won't be even remotely interested in triggering a conga sound on the head and a 909-style sub-kick on the rim, others will lap up the sonic opportunities.

Cymbals are multi-zone as well, allowing sounds to be coaxied from edge, bow and bell in as natural a fashion as possible. The cymbal surfaces are enveloped in silicon rubber, which 2Box amusingly refer to as offering "a feel close to the real thing". Rubber gives a response not a lot like bronze in my book, but these do feel good thanks to their well-judged 'give' when struck. The pads are easy on the wrist, but provide enough resistance to each stroke as to feel like you're playing an instrument, not poking a toy.

2Box also pursue the 'real feel' with a

From the Horse's Mouth!

Gary Cramphorn from 2Box DrumIt Five UK distributor **Hand In Hand**

When did Hand In Hand first become involved with 2Box?

"About five years ago. Bengt Lilja – who used to own 50 percent of Nord/ddrum – called us and asked if we were interested in helping him to set up a new design and manufacturing operation, with the intent of bringing a new e-drum system to the market. Knowing Bengt and Rik van der Bruggen's skills, we had no hesitation in supporting the project. Also as a distributor it was great being part of a project and having the chance to influence the end product."

There were some tantalising delays in bringing the DrumIt Five to the shelves...

"We have all said that if we'd known the stress involved with bringing a brand new technology to market, in the height of the worst financial crisis, we probably wouldn't have started! But the product had to be right and the response has been great. Nothing could have prepared 2Box for the orders that have come in for the kit. This is without even trying to supply America, which 2Box hope to do later this year."



Gary Cramphorn

And what can we expect in the way of OS updates and new products from the brand?

"We should have three-times lossless compression coming soon. That would make the internal memory 12Gb. Rik is quite secretive when it comes to what he is developing, but seldom does he disappoint when an update comes along."

2BOX DRUMIT FIVE



CYMBAL SURFACES

are enveloped in silicon rubber, offering what 2box call a "feel close to the real thing".



THE DRUMIT FIVE MODULE

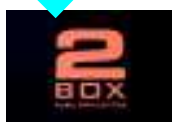
is a simple-looking device, but hosts a lot of impressive sounds. USB connectivity and 4Gb of flash memory add real flexibility.



COMBINATION OF

orange and brushed metal gives the kit something of a vaguely 'original iMac' feel about the surfaces.

ESSENTIAL SPEC



PRICE

£1,799

KITS

100

PADS

Mesh as standard, can be changed

FEATURES

4Gb flash memory, Drumit editing software

CONNECTIONS

MIDI in/out, six audio line out, headphone out, 10 dual-function trigger inputs, USB, Line In

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hi-hat mounted on a regular hi-hat stand. It's a single pad as opposed to the two-pad set-up of Roland's nice-but-pricey V12 hi-hat, but it retains a good degree of tactile response once calibrated to your own playing style. The fact that the snare pad mounts on a stand and the bass pad is a sizeable 14" also contribute to an impressively usable kit feel.

The Drumit Five brain is a strikingly simple-looking device. Given that we're used to seeing flashy LCD screens with big data wheels (and even mini mixers on top-level gear) from the big manufacturers these days, the Drumit Five might at first seem a bit underwhelming. But call to mind other quirky Scandinavian musical tools like Nord's Lead synth or the Elektron SPS1 drum machine and suddenly it looks confidently understated rather than underfeatured. The brain comes loaded with 100 factory kits, a selection of playalong tracks, USB input for connecting to Mac or PC, MIDI in and out and 4Gb of flash memory - in short, it acquits itself nicely, despite its uncluttered front panel.

Hands On

Given 2Box's trumpeting of the Drumit Five's 'open sound nature' (ie: the ability to import

your choice of sounds, or even create your own from WAV, REX or AIFF files with the company's own editing software), I was half expecting the kit to be a little lacking in terms of factory sounds. How wrong I was.

While the potential to get into this degree of personalisation is welcome, it's absolutely not necessary in order to start really enjoying the Drumit Five. Perhaps the fact that the unit

I'm pleased 2box have had the courage to come up with something as character-laden as the Drumit Five

comes from a small outfit and not one of the big corporations threw me off a bit, but the degree of dynamic response and quality of the multi-sampled preset acoustic kits thoroughly impressed and surprised. With not-terribly-obscure names that allude to Chilis, Foo Fighters and Zeppelin songs here and there, the acoustic emulations are warm, deep and involving. Cymbal response is lovely, with the move from defined bow 'ting' through to a crashing wash of edge tone on the ride handled near seamlessly; toms also deliver a three-dimensional and pleasingly organic dynamic tone.

Should the desire exist to create or install

your own sounds (and having heard the default sounds I reckon a good chunk of Drumit Five customers might limit their delving into such areas given the quality of what's already available), you can do so from the above-mentioned file types. Some online discussion has centred around being able to stuff the Drumit Five with sounds from your favourite VST (BFD, Superior Drummer, Addictive Drums etc) - aside from the legalities of doing so, those that employ proprietary file types won't allow a drag-and-drop approach. So don't get too carried away that the Drumit Five offers sonic solutions without limits, for the moment at least.

Verdict

Such was the level of expectation surrounding the Drumit Five that some might be resistant to the opinion that it's not, in fact, the answer to every last question you'll have of an electronic drum kit. But it is really good, and a very interesting addition to the marketplace. Different in character to offerings from the big boys, it's rewarding from the box, and will allow creative players scope to design sounds that are unique to their kit. Doing so might not be obstacle-free or effortless, but the fact that the opportunity exists is a good thing. If the promised support in terms of OS updates and editing improvements materialises in time, 2Box will convincingly establish themselves as a force to be reckoned with. **B**

Rating ★★★★★

TRY IT WITH...



A MAC OR PC

with your favourite drum VST. Still the simplest way of expanding the rig's sonic scope.



A DEGREE OF

patience and time if you want to create multi-layered sounds from WAV/REX files etc.



CLIFF HEWITT'S

personal kit sounds - the Apollo 440 man's own sound creations are available from the 2Box site.

