



MAPEX DESIGN LAB CHERRY BOMB & HEARTBREAKER SNARE DRUMS

From £443.99 Mapex adds new 'ultra-premium' snares to the Black Panther collection

WORDS: TOM BRADLEY

The Black Panther series is Mapex's flagship snare drum line, offering up a host of individual and characterful drums ranging from the more delicate Velvetone and Retrosonic to the outright heavy-duty Blaster and Sledgehammer models. Following on from the success of these snares, there's even been a line of full kits bearing the Black Panther name, including the Black Widow, Blaster, Velvetone and limited edition Retrosonic. Now, Mapex has decided to up its game once more with the release of three new Design Lab snare models: The Equinox, Cherry Bomb and Heartbreaker. Having been impressed by the Equinox last issue, we're excited to get our hands on its counterparts for review.

Build

The Cherry Bomb, aptly named for its 8-ply (9mm) cherry wood shell, is available in two sizes (14"x6" and 13"x5½") while it's more of a one-size-fits-all situation for the 14"x6" 8-ply (8mm) mahogany Heartbreaker. The latter also features 4mm mahogany reinforcement rings which, in addition to offering extra stability, according to Mapex "blend historic snare drum tone with modern snare design". Both snare drums are dressed with Sonic Saver hoops, Puresound Custom Series 16-strand wires, Black Panther cylinder-drive strainer and butt-end adjuster and Remo Ambassador X batter/clear Ambassador snare-side heads.

The Cherry Bomb features 10 vintage-style dual tube lugs with all hardware finished in a high-gloss chrome while the Heartbreaker sports 20 classic Black Panther single lugs with all hardware finished in a slightly cooler brushed black chrome. Both snares also share the same 45° SONICclear bearing edges (with

3/8" rounded back cuts), 2.7mm deep, 5½" wide tapered snare beds and Mapex's new Natural Satin SAS finish. Short for SONICclear Attenuation System, the SAS finish is applied to offer maximum shell resonance, unlike some thicker lacquers and wraps. It leaves the shells with a minimalist look, and helps to show off the natural grain of the wood.

Utilising many years of drum building knowledge, Mapex has designed each Design Lab drum using a 'Concept Hybrid' approach to shell design, shell composition and drum construction. This means that everything from shell material selection to bearing edges, snare beds and counter-hoops have been taken into careful consideration in order to craft each instrument. Mapex tells us that "each drum has been designed to combine 'Sound Concepts' to create unique and personal instruments for the demanding player". The Concept Hybrid profile of the Cherry Bomb is described as vintage, controlled and precise, while the Heartbreaker is dark, rustic and throaty. Each



Also try...

1 MAPEX DESIGN LAB EQUINOX SNARE

We say: "Mixes tradition with modernity in terms of both looks and sound. A stunning drum."



2 LIBERTY ELM BURR

We say: "Provides a great working platform for anything from tight backbeats to delicate ghosted notes - simply put, this is a highly desirable snare."

SIZES

The Cherry Bomb is the only Design Lab snare available in two sizes, 14"x6" and 13"x5½"

Design Lab snare also comes complete with a protective Black Panther drawstring bag.

Hands On

With both review snare drums sharing identical 14"x6" dimensions and the same natural satin finish, it's clear that they belong to the same family. The Heartbreaker's slightly darker mahogany shell is enhanced

AS ADVERTISED, THE HEARTBREAKER FEELS RIGHT AT HOME IN A ROCK SETTING, BLASTING THROUGH HEAVY GUITARS AND DELIVERING A BEAUTIFULLY BALANCED BACKBEAT IN A MEDIUM-LOW TUNING



HEADS

Both snares come as standard with Remo Ambassador X batter heads

CONCEPT HYBRID

Each drum has been given a profile to describe its tonal characteristics

CHROME

The Cherry Bomb is finished in high-gloss chrome while the Heartbreaker features brushed black chrome

LUGS

Heartbreaker snare drum has heavy-duty BP lugs while the Cherry Bomb opts for vintage-style tube lugs

by the brushed black chrome hardware and the classic Black Panther lugs look particularly stunning in this finish. The paler shade of the cherry shell is offset by traditional tube lugs finished in the standard chrome. Interestingly, there was already a Cherry Bomb within the Black Panther family and this new model is a "re-imagined and optimised" version of the original. For those familiar with the earlier model, you'll agree that this is a completely different beast.

Both snares are built to impeccable standards, which helps justify the higher than usual price tags - particularly the Heartbreaker which retails at £539.99 (the Cherry Bomb will set you back £443.99). Although described as "ultra-premium", the Design Lab snare drums do not appear to offer much more in terms of specification compared with the regular Black Panthers,

but then the Heartbreaker is one of the most visually stunning drums we've seen.

In terms of sound, both drums are on the drier side of the scale (certainly in comparison to the lively all-maple Equinox), which makes them a joy to tune and leaves fewer overtones to manage. The mahogany shell is the driest and also has the lowest fundamental pitch. By my reckoning, it's also the louder of the two drums. As advertised, the Heartbreaker feels right at home in a rock setting, blasting through heavy guitars and delivering a beautifully-balanced backbeat in a medium-low tuning. When cranked pretty much all the way up, the drum becomes a force to be reckoned with. Rim-shots become ear-splitting (not necessarily in a bad way) and it aggressively punches its way through the mix.

The Cherry Bomb more than lives up to

expectations in terms of being controlled and precise. You barely have to tickle the batter head to be rewarded with a full response from the 9mm shell. A little more lively than the Heartbreaker, it produces a warmer tone and sounds particularly great through a wide dynamic range. **R**

VERDICT: Mapex has delivered again with these distinctive, beautifully made stand-alone snare drums. Every detail has been considered in order to produce drums that are full of character.

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

Essential spec



PRICE

Cherry Bomb, £443.99;
Heartbreaker, £539.99

SHELL MATERIAL

Heartbreaker:
Mahogany;
Cherry Bomb: Cherry
Wood

CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Ply

NUMBER OF PLIES

Heartbreaker: 8-ply
(8mm) with 4-ply
re-rings;
Cherry Bomb: 8-ply
(9mm)

BEARING EDGES

45° SONICclear edges
with 3/8" rounded
back cuts

FINISH

Natural Satin SAS

HOOPS

Heartbreaker: Sonic
Saver brushed
black-chrome;
Cherry Bomb: Sonic
Saver chrome

SHELL AVAILABILITY

Heartbreaker: 14"x6";
Cherry Bomb: 14"x6"
and 13"x5½"

SUPPLIED HEADS

Remo coated
Ambassador X batter
and clear Ambassador
snare side

LUGS PER DRUM

Heartbreaker: 20 Black
Panther single lugs;
Cherry Bomb: 10
vintage-style dual
tube lugs

SNARE WIRES

Puresound Custom
Series 16-strand, steel
with copper end-plates

CONTACT

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