

SONOR ESSENTIAL FORCE S-DRIVE KIT

From £1,089 Sonor's Force series is given an update

WORDS: DAVE HOLMES

The Force series remains a healthy line for Sonor. Now there is an even wider choice of drums, several significant upgrades and the numerical suffix has finally been ditched - a move which will help clear up confusion over the kits' origins and year of manufacture.

Pitched at the top end of the Force series are the mid-range offerings with the Select Force (formerly 3007), constructed from maple, and its birch counterpart the Essential Force (formerly 2007). The starter kits are represented by the Smart Force kits (formerly 507), and Smart Force Xtend (with a set of starter cymbals and an extra cymbal stand included), which are each made from poplar.

THE SHEER ARTICULATION OF THE SUSPENDED TOMS TAKES ME COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE

Up for review is the new Sonor Essential Force 'S-Drive', a comprehensive six-drum kit with an eclectic size combination: 14"x6½" snare, 10"x6½" and 12"x7" rack toms, 14"x12" and 16"x14" floor toms and a 22"x20" bass drum. Also included is a tasty six-piece double-braced hardware set with the familiar half-moon nuts and bulbous rubber feet. There are stands for hi-hat and snare, two boom-type cymbal stands, SP473 bass drum pedal (with dual-sided beater) and a set of resin ball-type mounts with multi-clamps for each of the rack toms.

This Essential Force S-Drive model is the largest (in terms of quantity of drums), set-up of five 'preconfigured' kits available from Sonor. However, there is a choice of 15 additional individual drums and hardware to

purchase separately, so your kit could grow even larger and then some! Each of the kits and individual drums come with a choice of six finishes: Brown Fade (as with review model), Amber Fade, Green Fade, Blue Fade, Birch and Piano Black. Though for the pleasure of revelling in the visual delights of a 'fade' finish, there is a slight price increase due to the extra work involved.

Build

This 'S-Drive' configuration includes a comparatively huge (actually there is no comparison really, it really is huge!), undrilled bass drum, measuring 22" in diameter with a whopping 20" depth. Conversely the toms are of the 'quick' variety with a diminutive depth

(similar to those of Tama's Superstar EFX Hyper-Drive and Premier's Genista Fusion kits), where the reduced distance between the batter and resonant heads will usually produce a more immediate stick response. As a bonus it also effectively decreases the overall total height of the kit, allowing improved ergonomics for those who prefer a lower set-up.

Each shell is constructed from six plies of birch employing a proprietary method called CLTF or Cross Laminated Tension Free, which Sonor claims will give maximum strength and perfect roundness. The shells have been precision machined with a fairly standard 45° bearing edge, but there is also a minute counter-cut at the extreme outer edge of the shell. This creates a

LUGS

Each lug features Sonor's excellent TuneSafe anti-detuning system



HARDWARE

Included is a tasty six-piece double-braced hardware set



TOMS

The toms are of the 'quick' variety with a diminutive depth

BASS DRUM

S-Drive configuration includes a huge, undrilled 22"x20" bass drum

Essential spec



PRICE

Sonor Essential Force S-Drive Kit: 10"x6 1/2", 12"x7", 14"x12", 16"x14", 22"x20", 14"x6 1/2" snare, tom holders and hardware pack - five-piece 'Plain' finish, £1,089; five-piece 'Fade' finish, £1,160; six-piece S-Drive 'Plain' finish, £1,230; six-piece S-Drive 'Fade' finish, £1,299

SHELL MATERIAL

Birch

CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Plywood - Cross Laminate Tension Free 'CLTF' Process

PLIES

6

SHELL THICKNESS

7.2mm

BEARING EDGES

45° (close cut to outer bearing edge)

FINISHES AVAILABLE

Piano Black, Birch, Blue Fade, Amber Fade, Green Fade and Brown Fade

HOOPS

Triple Flanged Steel

SHELL AVAILABILITY

15 shells; additional shell sizes available by special order

SUPPLIED HEADS

Chinese manufactured Remo UX

LUGS PER DRUM

Snare, 16; small toms, 12; floor toms, 12; bass drum, 16

TOM MOUNTS

TAR (Total Acoustic Resonance) with ball and socket type mounts onto multi-clamps

HARDWARE

HS 275 (200 Series): boom cymbal stands (x2); hi-hat stand, snare stand, P437 bass drum pedal, multi-clamps (x2), tom mounts (x2)

CONTACT

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They say...

Paul Hemming is the Drum Division Manager for Sutherland Trading (Sonor UK Distributors)



Why drop the series' numeric prefix?

"It was widely felt that the numeric prefix within the product name has, at times, given the perception, for instance, that a Force 2007 kit is four years old, whereas it may in fact have only just rolled off the production line!"

Are Sonor drums made in the same factory as other makes?

"Many people believe that Sonor kits are made in the same factory as Mapex and so mistakenly believe they are the same shells re-badged. This is not the case. Sonor has its own production building and production plant. We feel it's important to let the customer know that all Sonor kits from Smart Force through to the new Ascent series are simply assembled in China. Sonor Germany completes the entire R&D process in-house in Germany, the materials are sourced by Sonor Germany while the QC department are actually Sonor staff, based in China. So what you're getting with a Sonor kit, be it the new Smart Force through to the Ascent series, is the very best of Sonor Germany in a more affordable package."



TOM MOUNTS

Toms have Total Acoustic Resonance (TAR) mounts

FINISH

Choice of six finishes include Brown Fade, as pictured

sharp-peaked tip of the bearing edge, producing a minimal contact point for each drum head.

Many upgrades are featured within the new Force series, including rubber gaskets on the bass drum claws, memory locks on bass drum spurs, metal badge, metal snare mechanism (as opposed to the plastic of previous models), but by far the most significant upgrade lies with the unique and typically Sonor-esque lugs which have a cunning bridged-style design, reducing the footprint and keeping them reasonably lightweight. Each lug features Sonor's excellent anti-detuning

their effectiveness as the floor tom legs have no knurling and simply rely on the superior grip these clamps offer and are able to maintain.

Hands On

Apart from the bass drum and the larger of the two floor toms, each of the other drums comes ready-assembled. When it came to the tuning bolts on the bass drum there was some resistance from the TuneSafe system, too much for the fingers alone, so I resorted to my Gibraltar RoboKey which has a 4-1 turning ratio, making the assembly job that much

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'TuneSafe' system which grips each tension rod around the lower portion of the thread internally by a nylon insert.

Sonor's suspended tom mounting system TAR (Total Acoustic Resonance) comprises a T-shaped, 3mm-thick (possibly slightly over-engineered), steel plate attached at the top by burly grommets encircling two of the lugs. The lower portion of this bracket is attached via a single fixing bolt which keeps the whole assembly rigid. This is really quite unusual as many manufacturers simply suspend their mounts from the top portion of these RIMS-type mounts. Exactly the same style hinged clamp is found on the two suspended toms, floor toms and bass drum spurs. Sonor demonstrates its confidence in

quicker. The rest of the kit simply required a tap and a tweak with a standard drum key to tune, with each drum coming up to pitch quickly and easily.

Right from the count of four, the drums have my mouth watering - the sheer articulation of the suspended toms takes me completely by surprise. It's one of those "did I do that?" moments when the sticks give such a sweet rebound, the double strokes appear to pour from the wrists. The sound produced is equally pleasing with the smaller-depth toms freely giving up their birch bite, ably chomping through the extraordinary sub-bass emanating from the kick drum.

A similarly rapid response was least expected from the kick (bearing in mind the

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head-to-head resistance mentioned earlier), but as both heads had been tensioned way above the wrinkled stage, this does seem to produce a terrific response in conjunction with the smooth action of the SP473 pedal itself, without any bottom-end compromise. The snare proves to be the perfect adversary to the rest of the kit, having plenty of body at a lower tuning. Tweaked up, with a single twist of a key and a 5B hurtling towards the head, it provides an authoritative cut while maintaining plenty of body. The 16-strand snare is just about able to satisfy those buzz rolls and grace notes and I would like to hear this drum with something a little more substantial.

The kit sounds surprisingly good considering the slightly inferior Chinese heads supplied. Much of the overall sound of the drum comes from the drum head itself and these drums especially, as they feature such a sharp bearing edge, rely heavily on the actual sound of the head - this kit warrants a better quality head. So try some decent Remo Ambassadors or Evans G1s and the kit will become a killer. **R**

VERDICT Sonor have retained many of the aspects which gave them their reputation for building superbly crafted drums. This kit is no exception - well-built, beautifully finished and sounding good.

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