

# PEARL MASTERS PREMIUM LEGEND KIT

**£3,225** Pearl's two differently constructed Masters Premium Legend kits could well live up to the name

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**P**earl's Masters Series has been in production for nearly 20 years and the Masters tag now covers two Pearl ranges, Masters Custom and Masters Premium. Masters Premium (where this kit is located) is further divided into two sub-ranges, Masters Premium Maple (MMP) and Masters Premium Legend (MPL). Pearl's system of nomenclature might suggest that MPL is the better of the two Masters Premium options; in fact both ranges are identically priced. What separates them is the shell construction.

and as being 'sourced from the best maple available', but other than this, few details of the wood are available. Certainly the look and feel of the maple confirms Pearl's assertion, as the grain is both tightly packed and smoothly flowing. The standard of shell construction is also unquestionably high, with each drum being as close to perfectly round as could be expected. Pearl's overlapping scarf joints are a beautifully executed detail. Although a more involved method of joining wood, there are solid technical and aesthetic reasons for incorporating scarf joints and it's a

## PEARL HAS INTERPRETED AN ANCIENT MATHEMATICAL FORMULA IN THE POSITIONING OF THE AIR HOLES

### Build

MMP drums are built around 4-ply maple shells with reinforcement rings while the review MPL kit is made with straight-sided 6-ply shells. Despite the difference in ply count, the MPL shells are only 0.4mm thicker than the equivalent MMP drums. This is due to the MPL plies being 0.9mm thick (with six making 5.4mm) while the MMP shells use alternating 0.9mm and 1.6mm thick plies (two of each ply totalling 5mm). Pearl has a long history of using the alternating ply technique so, by its own admission, creating thin shells from sheets of uniform thickness of ply is something of a new concept for the company. The 5.4mm shell is consistent across all the drums, including the bass drum and snare.

Pearl describes the maple used as A-class

pleasure seeing such a technique used. The shell's interiors are sealed with a clear lacquer while the bearing edges are precisely cut at 45° with a smaller 45° back-cut.

Five stock lacquer finishes are available with a further 27 special order options, making 32 choices altogether. The Navy Blue Sparkle of the review kit is one of three new colour schemes, along with Matte Natural and Brooklyn Burst. Pearl's reputation for lacquer finishes is well deserved - the quality and depth of the lacquer is difficult to describe without sounding like some kind of drum fetishist. Alternating between resembling countless highlights reflecting off an azure sea to gazing heavenward on a clear night, it's safe to say that I spent nearly as much time looking at the kit as I did playing it (and when I was playing my attention was



### HARDWARE

Kit features huge bass drum claws, telescopic spurs and Pearl's chunky Opti-Mounts



### LUGS

Bass drum and toms have minimum-contact bridge lugs



### HOOPS

Fat Tone hoops are an innovative design that blends elements from triple flanged and die-cast hoops

### SNARE

Snare sports Pearl's all-new swivel tube lugs sourced from the company's Reference Pure Series

## Essential spec



### PRICES

Pearl Masters Premium Legend kit MPL924XEP (22"x18"/10"x7"/12"x8"/16"x14"), £3,225; 14"x12" floor tom, £720; 14"x6½" snare, £600

### SHELL MATERIAL

Maple

### CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Ply

### NUMBER OF PLYS

6-ply, 5.4mm

### BEARING EDGES

Sharp 45° with a smooth back-cut

### FINISHES AVAILABLE

Standard lacquer finishes: Piano Black, Matte Natural, Scarlet Fade, Navy Blue Sparkle (as pictured), Brooklyn Burst, plus 27 other special order finishes

### HOOPS / RIMS

Pearl triple-flanged Fat Tone hoops

### SHELL AVAILABILITY

Bass drums: 18", 20", 22" & 24"; snare drums: 14"; toms: 8", 10" 12", 13", 14", 15" & 16"; floor toms: 14", 16" & 18"

### SUPPLIED HEADS

Bass drum: Pearl Masters Premium/Remo Powerstroke 3 clear batter and coated front head; snare drum: Remo coated Ambassador batter and hazy Ambassador snare-side; toms & floor toms: Remo clear Ambassador batters and resonants

### LUGS PER DRUM

Bass drum: 20; 10" & 12" toms: 12; 14" & 16" floor toms: 16; snare drum: 10 double-ended tube lugs

### TOM MOUNTS

Pearl Opti-Mounts, stand mounted

### SNARE STRAINER

Pearl SR-017 vertical pull throw-off and bridge style butt-end

### CONTACT

Pearl drums  
00 800 84249328  
www.pearleurope.com

## They say...

**Jeroen Breider** is European Branding Manager, Pearl Music Europe B.V.



**The spec for the new MPL is higher than ever...**

"The drum is formed from an open, fully toned, thin 6-ply shell, reacting to drummers wanting more tone, warmth and flexibility in today's recording environment. Pearl's 31-step painting process makes the finishes outstanding, matching beauty with durability."

**Scarf joints require a lot of skill to make - are they worth the time and effort?**

"Our Scarf joint seams provide 800 percent greater surface area than conventional butt joints. This provides strength and integrity to the shell while eliminating air-pockets. A butt joint works if the ends meet exactly, but often they don't and a gap is formed. SST (Superior Shell Technology) ensures no gaps or air pockets so the shells vibrate uniformly."

**How did the Fat Tone hoops come about?**

"Drummers love a more open tone and the Fat Tone hoops combine low-mass for incredible resonance with our exclusive hemmed and welded edge adding strength and rigidity at the point of contact for tremendous rim-shots and cross-sticking."

## SHELLS

Thin, straight-sided 6-ply maple shells are built to encourage natural resonance

## LACQUER

Five stock lacquer finishes are available with a further 27 special order options



invariably focused on the expanse of undrilled bass drum stretching out in front of me. Matching wooden hoops glitter at each end of the bass drum while the rest of the drums are fitted with Pearl's new Fat Tone hoops. A clever hybrid of triple flanged and die-cast hoop, they claim to offer the best of both worlds by taking a fairly standard flanged hoop design then folding over the top edge and welding it. The result is light (the hoops are 1.6mm thick) but the thicker top edge has the stoutness of a die-cast hoop. Pearl reckons that Fat Tone hoops hold their tuning, add clarity to rim-shots and cross-sticking, but

The review kit is based on a shell-pack made up of a 22"x18" bass drum, 10"x7" & 12"x8" toms and a 16"x14" floor tom, augmented by an additional 14"x12" floor tom and 14"x6½" snare. For such a large, thin-shelled drum, the bass drum produces very little in the way of overtones. With no dampening - only Remo Powerstroke 3 batter and ported front heads - it's deep and punchy but unwanted frequencies are minimal. With the heads tightened the sound becomes quite bright and buoyant, but the drum's power remains obvious. At lower tunings the note stretches out to Olympic dimensions but there

reveals more richness and body. Here the Fat Tone hoops add a degree of attack as well. Swapping the supplied heads for coated Ambassadors dilutes some of the sheer presence in favour of a thinner, woodier sound. Twin-ply clear heads, meanwhile, saturate the already fat notes even further.

In contrast to the other drums, the snare sports Pearl's all-new swivel tube lugs, sourced from the company's Reference Pure Series. The drum gives a similarly polished performance, possessing the sharpness of a metal-shelled drum with the added warmth of a wood shell. The Fat Tone hoops undoubtedly encourage its aggressive presence while also allowing the shell to breathe. With tension ratcheted into the head the drum is crisp and loud enough to loosen your fillings. Backing off the tuning relaxes the sound into a super-fat crunch that is equally penetrating. Again only token amounts of dampening is required (if any) as the snare is finely balanced on the line between having an edge and being too uninhibited. Quieter playing is also well catered for, with gentle brushstroke and cross-sticking carried faithfully. **R**

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don't influence the overall sound to the same degree as die-cast hoops.

### Hands On

Elsewhere across the kit, details abound, such as the huge bass drum claws, telescopic spurs and Pearl's chunky tom Opti-Mounts. Another new design concept found on all of the drums is the Golden Ratio air hole. The Golden Ratio is an ancient mathematical principle based on proportions and Pearl has interpreted the formula in the positioning of the air holes. In practice this means that the air holes on toms and bass drums are found closer to the resonant head to increase low frequencies, while for snares the holes are nearer the batter head to accentuate attack.

is still an unmistakably taut feel to its response - it's all muscle and no flab.

The toms are fitted with clear Ambassadors top and bottom and this combination produces almost velvety tones that are gloriously resonant. The sound of each drum can be picked out in isolation, even during flurries around the kit. Each note lingers on, fading cleanly, and by the time the larger floor tom is reached there is a near crescendo of toms humming in sympathy. When I giggered the kit it was miked up and I had to apply a tiny bit of dampening to both floor toms to stifle some of the ringing, but in all other scenarios (including recording) these toms could be left wide open. Played softly they murmur, while increasing the dynamics

## Also try...



### 1 GRETSCH USA STANDARD

**We say:** "Genuine American Gretsch drums made to the same time-honoured formula while being available off-the-shelf."



### 2 YAMAHA MAPLE CUSTOM ABSOLUTE

**We say:** "High end all-maple kit featuring low-mass Absolute lugs from consistently innovative brand."

**VERDICT:** Pearl's expertise is all over this solidly-constructed, great looking and exquisite-sounding kit. In quality terms it's up there with other high-end kits, with a pro price to match.

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