

Manufactured in Turkey, the cymbals are transported to Germany to be finished.



Meinl Mb20 Cymbals

From £97 | Promising volume and tonal quality, these cymbals are a union of age-old craftsmanship and modern technology. **Adam Jones** listens in.

Meinl's reputation for the consistency and quality of its cymbals is matched by the company's willingness to embrace technological advancements and new manufacturing techniques. For the new Mb20 range, Meinl has turned to a combination of traditional cymbal making skills and more modern procedures. In a marriage of old and new, the cymbals are the product of not one, but two separate factories located in different countries.

Aimed at the heavier, harder-hitting drummer, the Mb20 cymbals have been designed to incorporate a capacity for power and projection while still possessing a certain warmth and musicality. In short, their

brief is to deliver classic tonal values in today's high volume scenarios.

Meinl is a family run company that has been making cymbals for more than half a century. During that time it has turned into a truly international company, with 90 percent of its cymbals being exported. The Mb20 cymbals are marketed alongside the Meinl's top Byzance range and are cast from the same B20 bronze alloy. Generally considered the premium compound for making cymbals from, the high tin content (20 percent) of B20 makes it soft and flexible.

Hands on

The manufacturing begins in Meinl's Turkish factory where the cymbals are

individually cast. They are then lathed and hand hammered into shape under the guidance of master cymbal smith Murat Diril. As tuned, but superficially unfinished, cymbals they are then transported to Meinl's German HQ to be buffed to a brilliant shine and have the Meinl logo applied. Meinl have replaced the industry practice of stamping the serial number into each cymbal with laser engraving. This is not a high-tech solution for the sake of being high-tech. As Lee Worsley from Active Music, Meinl's UK distributors explains, the last thing a finished cymbal needs is to be whacked again with a hammer.

Once complete, the cymbals, as with all Meinl cymbals, are rested for

ESSENTIALS



PRICES

Meinl Mb20

Cymbals

Splashes **£97-117**

Crashes **£201-308**

China **£243**

Hi-hats **£313-338**

Rides **£308-432**

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KEY FEATURES

The brilliant finish ensures that the cymbals look as good as they sound.



Meinl's Mb20 cymbals begin life in Meinl's Turkish factory before being transferred to the company's German HQ to be finished.

The defining characteristic of the Mb20 range is plenty of volume and bags of sweet tonality.

three months to allow the metal to relax and fully open. In appearance, they bear many small hammer marks and tight lathing bands. The final centimetre of diameter of each cymbal tapers off in thickness and points down fractionally. The selection of sizes across the range goes from 10" to 22", with the choice of crashes being well represented at five models. Elsewhere, there are two splashes, two pairs of hi-hats, a trio of rides and a solitary china.

Splashdown

At 10" and 12" respectively, the Rock splashes set the tone of the range by displaying a forthright attack that is impressive, especially considering their size. The 12" in particular is incredibly loud for a splash. Beneath the brightness is a clean and coherent note. Where conflicting frequencies can all too often be found in splashes, there are none present in either of these examples.

The hi-hats are available in 14" and 15" diameters and feature a curved soundwave bottom cymbal in both sizes. The 14" pair delivers strident attack that is steadied by a balanced note beneath. They move from a superclean closed sound through a sparkling metallic crunch to a bright frothy wash. The 15" hats are even more revealing. 15" is a fairly large diameter for a pair of hi-hats, but for the sort of musical environment that these cymbals are destined for, one that is thoroughly appropriate. The extra inch makes for a far deeper

The 18" China is a wonderful example of such a cymbal. It is aggressively voiced and blindingly quick, not to say loud, on the outer lip.

sounding and authoritative pair of hats. The opening attack is still present, which ensures that they remain responsive, but by relaxing your foot on the pedal just a little, you can bring forth a huge slab of juicy crunch that makes for the beefiest of backbeats. Further up the dynamic scale, the hats produce a wash that would be capable of engulfing all but the loudest of backlines.

The crashes are available in 16"-20" and are spaced at intervals of an inch. According to Meinl they are all harmonically matched, to the extent that any combination of sizes will sit together sympathetically. On the evidence presented here, Meinl is right. All of the crashes open quickly in an explosion of attack. The 16" crash is, unsurprisingly, the most rapid among them while the 20" equally takes the longest to decay, but they are pretty much all cut from the same cloth. There are obvious tonal variations among them – the larger the cymbal then the deeper the note and the higher the volume.

Beyond 18" things get frighteningly loud and the 20" is an absolute monster of a crash. The 17" stood out slightly from the rest on account of its greater degree of complexity, which I found very pleasing. The 18", 19" and

20" models all function effectively as crash/rides and the bells on the 19" and 20" examples are distinctive enough to give real substance to ride patterns.

Hells bells

The three ride cymbals are all heavy models and span from 20" to 22". Their weighty form guarantees a high-pitched ping that, on the 20" ride, I found a little on the glassy side. Going up an inch to the 21" model the voice becomes a little deeper and more palatable as a result. The 22" Heavy Bell ride is heavier still and sports a pronounced bell. It is easy to control though, as its massive bulk keeps any wash virtually non-existent.

While the bells on the 20" and 21" are nothing less than commanding, the enlarged bell on the 22" is in a whole other league altogether. Meinl has designed it with the purpose of cutting across double bass drum figures in mind and I cannot think of a more suitable use for it. It clangs much like a fire bell.

Although it is the sole oriental

offering, the 18" china is a wonderful example of such a cymbal. It is aggressively voiced and blindingly quick, not to say loud, on the outer lip. However, moving inside, it opens with the merest flick of a stick and rides quite beautifully. Its characteristics encompass a brashness at the edges to a delicate, almost papery trashiness towards the centre, with response being excellent all the way across. **R**

RHYTHM VERDICT

Meinl have created the Mb20 cymbals in order to offer louder drummers a more musical cymbal option.

Cymbals capable of high levels of volume can, in their efforts to be heard, err on the shrill side of cutting – to a degree, it goes with the territory. However, these cymbals retain a definite warmth, good tonal harmony and even occasional complexity behind their substantial projection. Meinl's masterstroke is in harnessing both the traditional and up-to-the-minute aspects of cymbalmaking to fashion a set of cymbals that are beautifully crafted and of faultless quality. As they have been designed to suit a precise musical environment ie loud, they are not going to appeal strongly to quieter players (though the China would complement any drummer's set-up). But if hard and heavy is where your playing is at, then you certainly ought to give these metals a spin.

+ These are very loud and musical cymbals, the China would complement any drum kit.

- The cymbals are very loud and heavy, but would be of little interest to subtler players.

RATING

