

# Meinl Mb20 Cymbals

**From £275** | Meinl's new Mb20s let metal drummers go 'all the way up to 11'. **Jordan McLachlan** dons his earplugs...

## ESSENTIALS



### PRICES

Mb20 Cymbals  
Crashes **£275-£339**  
Rides **£339-£583**

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The strapline for Meinl's new Mb20 cymbals is simple: Aggressive Design, Aggressive Sound. It's a phrase designed to catch the attention of decibel-dealing drummers of all persuasions. The Mb20s are about take-it-or-leave-it heaviness. A series of instruments created to deliver massive volume and searing tonal energy to tear through layers of distorted rhythm guitars. All-rounders are well and good, but this kind of genre-specific cymbals make for fun time in the review studio.

### Hammer to fall

The clue is in the name of Meinl's new series. The Mb20s are crafted from B20 alloy (80 percent copper, 20 percent tin), just like the company's respected Byzance 'traditional' range. Each cymbal in the series starts life as an individual cast blank, an expensive but quality-ensuring method that is in keeping with the Mb20s' high-end nature.

Cast and then hand-hammered, the cymbals are shipped from Turkey to

Meinl's German base where they are treated to sound-shaping lathing and polishing. In addition to the sonic character that this process imparts, it also makes for a line of extremely sexy looking metals. Hammering marks are extensive on all the cymbals here and the polished surfaces look fantastic. Perfect eye candy for metallers for whom bigger and brasher is almost always better.

### Power and purity

Big sizes rule supreme. Yes, there are 16" crashes on offer, but the whole line is geared toward huge, tom-dwarfing circles of power. This is reflected in the selection sent in for review: an 18" Medium Heavy crash is the most measly of the bunch here, which comprises 19" and 20" Heavy crashes, 20" Heavy ride, 22" Heavy bell ride and the hernia-inducing 24" Pure Metal ride.

When we interviewed Lamb of God's rhythmic maelstrom, Chris Adler, earlier in the year he waxed lyrical about the 24" Pure Metal ride which was created to his



## KEY FEATURES



**The extensive hand-hammering** of the Mb20s lends the cymbals a seriously sophisticated aesthetic edge. You know where your money's gone...

specific requirements. I've been dying to get my hands on it since. This is a phenomenal cymbal, and not simply because of its size, weight and price, although all are impressive. It is an incredible sounding instrument that manages to combine ear-shattering volume with a remarkable three-dimensional tone. There's an ever-present hint of warmth and depth here that surprises, given that you might expect volume and clattering upper-mids above everything else, and this adds extra muscle and tone to a cymbal that fits perfectly with skull-battering double-kick patterns. You have to be extremely assertive with it to push it into a wash, but that's no bad thing (and hardly avoidable given its proportions), and it means the Pure Metal ride carries a minimum penalty in terms of unwanted sustain and overtones. And the bell? Jeez, I can still hear it and I left the cymbal in the studio nearly 24 hours ago. Yes, the Pure Metal ride is fearsomely expensive, but the fact that it will outlast all of us and sound like the end of the world long after the end of the world means the cymbal will pay for itself in the long run. Just make absolutely sure it's the cymbal for you before reaching for your wallet.

It's not hard to see and hear why the 24" Pure Metal ride is a source of such pride for Lamb of God's Chris Adler. It's a truly gobsmacking cymbal.

The choice of rides in the Mb20 range means plenty of options. They're all heavy enough to sink battleships, but each is tailored to fulfil a slightly different role.

## Ride the lightning

The strength of the Mb20s as a series is such that the Pure Metal ride doesn't overshadow the rest of the gathering. The inclusion here of both 20" Heavy and 22" Heavy bell rides is interesting because it highlights a couple of options for differing metal-inclined pounders. The 20" Heavy is a great, easily crashable ride for very heavy, punk-inspired blasting, but it cleans up nicely when struck on the bow. Stick definition is well-balanced and powerful and the bell clear and connected to the rest of the cymbal's response. The bigger ride offers more in the way of a death metal-friendly 'ping' (a somewhat fallacious description where the Heavy bell ride is concerned, but you know what I mean), and the fiercely penetrating bell is rather more forward sounding than in the case of the 20". It's not as versatile as its smaller brother, but its specific talents are likely to find real favour with its target market.

On to the crashes. An 18-inch is probably about as small as you want to go for a main crash if you're fighting with cranked Marshalls and the 18" Medium Heavy Mb20 is a cracking version. Its speedy response has a full mid-range and enough sustain to stick around long enough to make an impression without cluttering your sound. I like it. A lot.

The 19" and 20" pair turn everything up a notch or two and are awe-inspiring as a result. The smaller of the two sizzles in a very distinctive fashion and I have to admit that it was perhaps my least favourite of the selection. The 20" is a 'kill 'em all' proposition that lays waste to all in its path every time you strike it – in a good way – thanks to its relatively sparky attack and vast mid-range muscle; it's fantastic to ride, creating a thick wave of tone on which guitarists can surf solo for hours (and hours, knowing them). For me, the 19" falls between stools a little bit – not as rabid as the 20" and less quick to

react as the 18" Medium Heavy. You might, on the other hand, adore it. **R**

## RHYTHM VERDICT

Meinl have hit the bullseye with the Mb20s. My slight reservations about the 19" Heavy crash shouldn't count as much of a black mark because it'll doubtless end up as someone's pick of the group. And the rest of them are just fabulous. Of course, the Mb20s only really make sense for the heaviest and most dedicated of players – they're too dominating for situations where you're not powering a riff-mongering gaggle of tattooed dudes – but if you're into God Forbid, Killswitch, Morbid Angel or, of course, Lamb Of God, and in the market for a new collection of crunching metallic marvellousness then they're more than equal to anything else currently available.

**+** Utterly convincing set of metal-specific monsters...

**-** Exclusive to those with Metallica-sized budgets.

**RATING**

★★★★★