

GEAR REVIEW

PEARL MIDTOWN KIT



£407 Pearl re-enters the mini-kit world with the release of the Midtown

WORDS: TOM BRADLEY

Among a plethora of new gear released for 2016, Pearl has brought us a brand new Eliminator pedal, a second Dennis Chambers signature snare and the revamped Session Studio Classic (all reviewed by yours truly). The latest recent addition that we've managed to get our mitts on is Pearl's second contribution to the mini-kit market after the Rhythm Traveler, the Pearl Midtown.

Build

Unlike Pearl's Rhythm Traveler (which had wider but extremely shallow dimensions), the Midtown has been developed as more of a bop-style kit with small diameter drums but more regular depths. Dubbed "the big kit with the small footprint", it claims to offer a sound to rival that of a normal sized kit despite its compact nature.

True to the style of these bop-cum-jungle

matching 13"x5½" snare drum which plays host to Pearl's proprietary 16-strand snare wires and throw-off/butt plate. This is currently the only configuration available for the Midtown kit, with no foreseeable plans for any more. A compact two-piece carry-case set is available for the kit but unfortunately only in the US right now. We should see that make an appearance over here at some point.

The Chinese-built shells are constructed from 6-ply, 7.5mm poplar and come in a choice of two sparkle wrap finishes. As you can see from the photos, our review kit is a rather fetching Black Cherry Glitter, with Black Gold Sparkle being the other option. Each drum is supplied with 1.6mm steel triple-flanged hoops except for the bass drum, which is treated to matching wood hoops. Chinese made Remo UT heads are supplied with the kit; clear Ambassador equivalents for the toms (top and bottom), with a coated for

EACH DRUM IS SUPPLIED WITH 1.6MM STEEL TRIPLE-FLANGED HOOPS EXCEPT FOR THE BASS DRUM, WHICH IS TREATED TO MATCHING WOOD HOOPS

kits is the obligatory 16"x14" bass drum. The drum comes supplied with good quality spurs and a riser to allow the drum enough clearance for positioning the bass drum pedal. Unlike the chrome of the other hardware (included is a single tom mount for the drilled bass drum and legs for the floor tom), the long pole and triangular base of the riser piece are finished in black. The bottom of the bass drum features a drilled hole (identical to the one on the top which accommodates the tom arm) that allows the base to be held in place using a standard wing-nut. The batter-side hoop also has a deep, semi-circular cut-out to allow the beater stem plenty of room to manoeuvre, ensuring a square contact to the head.

The rest of the four-piece shell pack comprises a 10"x7" rack tom, complete with Pearl's OptiLoc suspension system for added resonance, a 13"x12" floor tom and a

the snare batter. The kick drum sports a clear Powerstroke batter and a white coated head complete with a black Pearl logo on the front.

With the Midtown coming in at the lower end of the spectrum in terms of price, it is perhaps expected that there might be a few minor issues in the build department. Referring specifically to the quite visible overlaps of not only the sparkle wrap but, more obviously, the inside of the shells and the wood hoops of the bass drum. On the flip-side though, this kit surprises us with little touches like rubber gaskets on the bass drum claws, sturdy, locking telescopic bass drum spurs and the aforementioned OptiLoc suspension system for the un-drilled rack tom. Chrome memory locks are also provided for the tom arm and bass drum lift. They are also interlocking which not only allows you to find the correct height but also ensures that you also get exactly the same angle as before.



BASS DRUM LIFT

The 16" bass drum features a black riser with a triangular base to ensure the correct height for a bass drum pedal



MATCHING SNARE

The Midtown has a matching 13"x5½" snare drum which exceeds expectations for the price

Essential spec



PRICES

£407

SHELL MATERIAL

Poplar wood

CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Ply

NUMBER OF PLIES

6 plies

BEARING EDGES

45°

FINISHES AVAILABLE

Black Gold Sparkle;
Black Cherry Glitter (as pictured)

HOOPS

1.6mm steel
triple-flanged hoops

SHELL AVAILABILITY

One shell-pack available:
bass drum: 16"x14";
tom: 10"x7"; floor tom:
13"x12"; snare drum:
13"x5½"

SUPPLIED HEADS

Toms: Pearl/Remo UT
single-ply clear for both
batter and reso; snare:
Pearl/Remo UT
single-ply coated batter;
clear reso; kick: Pearl/
Remo

LUGS PER DRUM

Kick: 12; rack tom: 12;
floor tom: 12; snare
drum: 16

TOM MOUNTS

Opti-Loc Suspension
System for rack tom
with included single
tom arm

CONTACT

Pearl Drums
www.pearleurope.com

Little touches like this go a long way when it comes to setting up and packing down your kit in a hurry. The use of wing nuts on the telescopic bass drum spurs and bass drum lift also aid in making this kit a doddle to set up, and not having to mess around with drum keys also helps in this regard.

Considering the RRP of just over £400, this kit seems to be shaping up quite nicely. As

Pearl points out, the Midtown offers "a whole kit for the price of some snare drums", which is hard to argue with.

Hands On

The thin poplar shells are wonderfully resonant, and this makes the kit very lively overall. Combined with the single-ply factory heads, the snare and toms

sing well in particular.

The kick provides a pleasantly low-pitched boom which is workable, if not a little underpowered. With some internal dampening, the sound is transformed to a drier, focussed thump. Tuned up, a sustained note starts to appear which takes it into hip-hop and even jazz territory.

The toms are musical and work best



GEAR REVIEW

They say...

Jeroen Breider European Branding
Manager for Pearl Europe



What was the inspiration for Pearl's new Midtown kit?

"We have the gigging drummer in mind, who demands gear that can rise above the noise without getting in the way."

Are there more finishes or configurations on the way?

"As we newly introduced this Midtown kit, we have chosen to keep it simple and not to make the choices too difficult. One configuration, two colours, that's it."

Who do you see primarily using this kit?

"Those drummers who are gigging, and living in a big city, needing to transport their kit easily and needing a big sound. The Midtown Kit's compact size makes it ideal for tight spaces, and quickly breaks down for quick and easy transport. Those drummers with small rooms to rehearse or practise in, with little space at home."

How does the Midtown compare to the Rhythm Traveler?

"The Midtown kit is much more a be-bop style kit where the Rhythm Traveler Gig was more a combination of Cocktail kit, with shallower depth toms and snare. The Midtown kit is the full-size kit with a smaller footprint, which delivers lots of low-end punch for solid backbeats."



SHELLS

Chinese-built shells are constructed from 6-ply, 7.5mm poplar



THROW OFF

Snare has Pearl's proprietary 16-strand snare wires and throw-off/buttplate

from a medium tuning upwards. At low tension, they are quite slappy and provide little in the way of resonance. Thankfully, the floor tom starts to come to life at a low enough pitch to make it useful for the non-jazzers out there. The rack tom is more or less useless until the sweet spot is found at a medium to high tuning. At that point, it

produces a pure note whilst maintaining a decent attack.

Like the rack tom, the snare also performs best in a higher tuning. For me, the crowing glory of the Midtown kit, the little 13"x5½" stinger sounds utterly fantastic from anything more than a couple of key-turns up. The 16-strand snare wires are responsive and give

Also try...



1 PDP NEW YORKER

We say: "I had fun playing this kit. The sparkle finish grows on me every time I look at it, and you can't argue with the price tag."

a good balance to ghost notes and backbeats alike; rimshots are able to cut through without being overbearing. The drum is lively and open and would work well for reggae, Latin and jazz styles. As is the case for the whole kit for that matter. With minimal dampening, the snare is dried out and the tone is focussed.

Having taken this kit to a couple of gigs and a few practice sessions, I was able to really put it through its paces in different musical situations. The first of which was a function gig taking place in a rather large and reverberant hall. In this context, the volume was helped by the natural reverb, and during soundcheck I was pretty blown away by the sound it was creating. Into the first set though, with the band in full swing, it became apparent that the drums just weren't cutting through as much as one might hope.

The second gig was in stark contrast to the

THE THIN POPLAR SHELLS ARE WONDERFULLY RESONANT WHICH MAKES THE KIT VERY LIVELY OVERALL. COMBINED WITH THE SINGLE-PLY FACTORY HEADS, THE SNARE AND TOMS IN PARTICULAR SING WELL



CLEAR HEADS

The kit is supplied with Remo UT clear single-ply heads

HOOP CUT-OUT

The hoop on the batter side has a cut-out which allows the beater stem room to manoeuvre

SPARKLE WRAP

The Midtown is available in just two wrap finishes: Black Cherry Glitter and Black Gold Sparkle

first, in a small pub with a very dry acoustic. From the off it was clear that the kick drum alone was not going to keep up with the seven-piece funk and soul band. With no mics on the kit, there was just too much volume to contend with and I found myself over compensating by absolute leathering the bass drum and toms especially. Unfortunately, this resulted in the stock heads taking more of a battering than either myself or the kit had expected. Once again though, the snare drum was able to hold its own and deliver a tight backbeat for all to hear.

Now, crammed tightly into the corner of my garage between a workbench and a motorcycle, the kit is doing itself proud. The tiny space that it occupies on the floor makes it ideal for those whose room is limited, be it for a practice kit in your bedroom or for taking to smaller gigs where not much



2 LUDWIG QUESTLOVE BREAKBEATS KIT

We say: "A cohesive package of portability, sound and all-round style."

volume is required. In the bass trap created by the corner of the room, the kick drum now sounds punchy and the floor tom hums away beautifully.

Due to the compact size of the drums, not only does this make a good travel or busking kit but could also provide a great set-up for the aspiring drummer. With everything taken down to its lowest setting and packed nice and close together, the kit takes up barely any room and I would wager that even a five-year-old would have no issues rattling round it. I have even considered buying one for my son but must remind myself that seven months is probably just a little young still!

To recap then, the Pearl Midtown is a fine bit of kit for the money. It may be a little rough around the edges in places but the sparkle finishes look good, the included shell hardware is sturdy and well made, and the

drums (particularly that snare drum) don't sound bad at all. You could definitely get away with it at a jazz gig but it will also handle quieter funk and latin gigs, no problem. The kit creates a lovely natural drum sound which would sound great miked up for the bigger stages and will likely record well too. Some may even consider using it for a hybrid set-up with drum triggers. I experimented using an electronic kick trigger with great results. **R**

VERDICT: Does pretty much what it says on the tin but lacks projection and volume. Takes up very little room and looks good, especially for the price.

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