

GEAR REVIEW

TAMA S.L.P. STUDIO MAPLE KIT



From £1,499 Tama expands its Sound Lab Project range with a selection of brand new kits for 2018

WORDS: **TOM BRADLEY**

Among a host of new drums, percussion products and accessories from Tama this year are new Sound Lab Project (S.L.P.) kits. Following the success of 12 stand-alone snare drums previously released under the S.L.P. moniker, the Japanese drum giant has decided to expand the range with the addition of four full kits based on the same specifications as their respective snares. The Studio Maple model pictured here was inspired by one of the original eight S.L.P. snares released in 2012, as was the limited edition G-Bubinga (limited no doubt as a result of its extra thick bubinga shells combined with the recent limitations put in place to control the use of exotic rosewoods), while the Dynamic Kapur kit and its snare counterpart are both brand-new arrivals for 2018. Finally, the Fat Spruce is based on a more recent addition to the S.L.P. snare line. We managed to get our hands on a full six-piece, wood-hooped S.L.P. Studio Maple kit

pure maple and feature a urethane coating, added for increased durability. The toms share identical features to the snare, including the 5mm-thick shells and Sound Focus rings. The bass drum features a slightly meatier 8-ply (6mm) construction and is drilled to accommodate a ball-jointed double tom holder.

The Studio Maple is available in just two size configurations, neither of which include the matching snare drum. The four-piece shell-pack includes a 22"x16" bass drum, 10"x7" and 12"x8" rack toms and a 16"x16" floor tom, while the larger set-up (as review) bundles an additional 14"x14" floor tom.

Rack toms come complete with a brand new shell mounting system for Tama, named the Direct Flexi-Mount. This two-part design uses a plate attached directly to the drum shell which is hinged to another section that receives the L-rod. This allows slight horizontal motion of the drum which Tama suggests "provides smooth decay for a clear



UNLIKE MOST MODERN SUSPENSION MOUNTING SYSTEMS, DESIGNED FOR LESS SHELL CONTACT AND MAXIMUM RESONANCE, THE DIRECT FLEXI-MOUNT SYSTEM OFFERS A HALF-WAY-HOUSE BETWEEN THE ZERO-CONTACT APPROACH AND TRADITIONAL DIRECT-TO-SHELL MOUNTS

prior to its official launch at NAMM 2018, so let's take a look.

Build

Our review kit includes the matching 14"x6½" Studio Maple wood hoop snare drum which comprises a 6-ply (5mm) all-maple shell, complete with Tama's Sound Focus (reinforcement) rings. The distinct thick wooden hoops are also constructed from

sound that draws out the intrinsic characteristics of the shell material". Unlike most modern suspension mounting systems designed for less shell contact and maximum resonance, this method offers a halfway house between the zero-contact approach and traditional direct-to-shell mounts.

Each of the S.L.P. kits is currently available in just one finish option, unique to its own model. In the case of the Studio Maple, the

NATURAL LACQUER

The Gloss Sienna finish shows off the stunning natural maple woodgrain

WOOD HOOPS

The distinct wooden hoops are made from pure maple with a urethane coating for added durability

Essential spec



PRICES

Four-piece shell pack, £1,499;
Five-piece shell pack, £1,999

SHELL MATERIAL

Maple

CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Ply

NUMBER OF PLIES

Snare and toms: 6-ply (5mm);
Bass drum: 8-ply (6mm)

BEARING EDGES

Rounded

FINISHES AVAILABLE

Gloss Sienna (GSE)

HOOPS

Maple wood hoops

SHELLS

LMP42RTL: 22"x16", 10"x7", 12"x8", 14"x14";
LMP52RTL: 22"x16", 10"x7", 12"x8", 14"x14", 16"x16";
Standalone snare: 14"x6½"

LUGS PER DRUM

Bass drum, 16;
Rack toms, 12;
Floor toms, 16;
Snare drum, 16

TOM MOUNTS

Direct Flexi-Mount

SUPPLIED HEADS

Evans G1 Coated batter;
Tama Power Craft II reso

CONTACT

Headstock Distribution
0121 508 6666
www.headstockdistribution.com

SIZES

This configuration comprises a 22"x16" bass drum and 10"x7", 12"x8", 14"x14" and 16"x16" toms. The matching snare is available separately

GEAR REVIEW

They say...

Simeon Read

Marketing and Percussion Product Specialist, Headstock Distribution



Why expand on the S.L.P. range, where do they fit in the wider spectrum of Tama kits?

"In 2012 we introduced the S.L.P. line of snares which proved very successful based on the distinctive characteristics of each drum. With the strong nature of this we believe it attracts the attention and excitement of both consumers and markets worldwide. The price range is between Starclassic Performer B/B and Superstar Hyper-Drive, however the S.L.P. kits are considered an independent, brand new series."

What kind of tonal characteristics should we expect from the Studio Maple?

"The Studio Maple S.L.P. kit will give you a focused, warm, woody tone with a clear attack, and relatively short sustain and decay. The S.L.P. Maple, whether live or in the studio, will give you a warm sound with controlled resonance."

Is there only one finish option per kit?

"We offer the kit with the same design as S.L.P. snares, to continue the established image of the S.L.P. line. Based on the concept of the snares, we carefully selected the specification, configuration and finish to achieve the full potential of the material."

chosen finish is the beautiful Gloss Sienna. Highlighting the natural appearance of the maple wood grain, the lacquered surface starts with a lighter shade of brown in the centre and darkens very slightly to a more burnt colour towards the edges - it's similar to a burst but infinitely more subtle. The maple hoops are presented in their much paler, natural state which contrasts against yet complements the darker high-gloss shell finish. Due to their width, the chunky counter-hoops have had sections removed to accommodate the shell hardware. The top hoops on the rack toms, for instance, have had broad sections removed where the tom

THE COMBINATION OF THE LIVELY SHELL MATERIAL AND THE DRYNESS OFFERED BY THE HOOPS STRIKES A VERY WORKABLE MIDDLE GROUND, OFFERING FULL SOUNDING TOMS WITH QUICK ATTACK AND SHORTER SUSTAIN

TOM MOUNTS

Rack toms come with a brand new shell mounting system called the Direct Flexi-Mount



TRUSTED LUGS

The Studio Maple shares its lug design with the former flagship Starclassic series



mounts are positioned, while the bottom hoops of the floor toms have been treated to much smaller, precision cut-outs to allow just enough room for the legs to be inserted. This does little to detract from the kit's overall classy aesthetic.

All remaining shell hardware is finished in chrome which includes Starclassic lugs, Linear-Drive snare throw-off and removable butt-plate (which features an additional

Also try...



1 PDP CLASSIC WOOD HOOP KIT

We say: "This set is a great sounding, cost-effective alternative to DW's flagship drum range. A great sounding, lush looking kit but with limited size options."

strainer), the Direct Flexi-Mount system, floor tom legs and bass drum spurs. Each drum shell is completed with the golden rectangular Tama Sound Lab Project badge.

Hands On

By looks alone, one might be fooled into believing the Studio Maple kit sits well above its £1,499-£1,999 price tag (depending on the model you choose). Despite the obvious giveaways such as the drilled bass drum and more budget bass drum spurs (in comparison with Tama's top ranges like the Star and Starclassic), the kit still carries itself with a degree of class and high-quality craftsmanship. The lesser-seen wooden hoops also add a very special aesthetic.

In terms of sound, the expectedly versatile maple shells afford it a seriously wide tuning range right across the board - exactly what the doctor ordered when taking



RANGE

There are four new S.L.P. kits. Other models include Fat Spruce, Dynamic Kapur and G-Bubinga

BASS DRUM

Shell is 8-ply and is drilled to accommodate a ball-joint tom holder

HARDWARE

Shell hardware is finished in chrome, including the Starclassic lugs

into consideration the studio-friendly intentions of this kit, although it wouldn't sound out of place on stage at the right gig either.

Where we'd expect the maple to be extremely resonant, the shells are subdued somewhat by the density of the ample wood hoops. The combination of the lively shell material and the dryness offered by the hoops strikes a very workable middle ground, offering full sounding toms with quick attack and shorter sustain. Controlling overtones without having to go overboard on the dampening gels bodes well for achieving a natural sound for recording – another tick in the plus column for the Studio Maple. The 10"x7" and 12"x8" rack toms best represent the kit's impressive tuning range and actually produce quite a mellow tone, accentuating the warmth of the maple shells and hoops.

Also try...



2 TAMA S.L.P. WOODEN SNARE DRUMS

We say: "Tama has done a fine job of narrowing down the choice of snare drums and, in among these eight S.L.P. snares, you're likely to find at least one to suit."

Tuned low, the square 14"x14" and 16"x16" floor toms are a force to be reckoned with. At the bottom of their range they have plenty of low-end attack and a well-timed grumble that doesn't linger for too long. Tuned up slightly the drums are musical and more resonant but still pack a punch down below. At this pitch the warmth starts to glow through the tone with the 14" embodying the characteristics of the Studio Maple and acting as the perfect bridge between the rack toms and the powerful 16" floor tom.

The bass drum has an incredibly dry response and at a low tuning offers very little in the way of resonance, producing a short thump dampened further with the addition of a small pillow. Even with the dampening removed, the drum doesn't elicit the boom that we were expecting. The snare drum needs little discussion as it has been on

the market for some years already. It's still worth mentioning however that rim-shots on this thing are something to behold. Not only do the wood hoops sound fantastic but they also feel great to play. The hoop is raised just the right amount from the head, making for a really comfortable playing angle. **R**

VERDICT: A great looking, affordable kit which delivers exactly what it promises. Dry and versatile, and with the top-notch design and attention-to-detail we've come to expect from Tama, the S.L.P. Studio Maple is perfect for recording and feels great to play.

BUILD QUALITY



PLAYABILITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



RHYTHM RATING

