

NEW GEAR

EXCLUSIVE



ESSENTIAL SPEC



SOUNDCASTER
cymbals are all cut from rolled sheets of B12 bronze alloy

PRICES:

Meinl Soundcaster Fusion cymbals
10" splash: £101
16" Medium crash: £215
18" Medium crash: £254
18" China: £254
14" Medium hi-hats: £299
20" Medium ride: £318
20" Powerful ride: £318
22" Powerful ride: £427

CAST OR PRESSED

Pressed

ALLOY USED

B12 bronze

FINISH

Unlathed and polished centre, lathed natural outer edge

HAND OR MACHINE HAMMERED

Machine

COUNTRY OF MANUFACTURE

Germany

DIAMETERS AVAILABLE

10" to 22"

MODELS AVAILABLE

Splash, crashes, China, hi-hats, rides

SUITABLE FOR

Pop, rock, indie, metal

CONTACT

Active Music Distribution
7 Goose Green Trading Estate
47 East Dulwich Road
London SE22 9BN
Telephone
020 8693 5678
Website
www.meinl.com

MEINL SOUNDCASTER FUSION CYMBALS



From £101 Meinl enters the world of mixed finish cymbals with its Soundcaster Fusion range. Adam Jones mixes it up

Launched at the 2009 NAMM show, Meinl's Soundcaster Fusion cymbals feature two contrasting types of finish side-by-side on each cymbal. While this treatment is not without precedent, it is relatively new among mainstream cymbals. The new Soundcaster Fusion cymbals sit alongside the established Soundcaster Custom models, dividing the Soundcaster range into two groups. While the new selection of Fusion cymbals is not as comprehensive as that of the existing Customs, it features diameters from 10" to 22". The launch revealed single models of splash, hi-hats and china, two crashes and three rides, all of which *Rhythm* tried out.

Build

Both Soundcaster Fusion and Custom cymbals are created in the same way - cut from rolled sheets of B12 bronze alloy. Where the equivalent Soundcaster Customs look like regular cymbals, the new Fusions are unmistakably different. From the centre hole to almost halfway across the diameter, each cymbal is unlathed and polished to a

glass-like sheen. The remainder of each cymbal is scored with narrow, regimented lathing bands and has a satin style finish. Neat bands of machine-made hammer marks flow across all areas of each cymbal with the exception of the bell, which remains hammer (and lathe) free. Underneath the cymbals are treated in exactly the same manner, with the only difference being the reproduction of just a single Meinl logo.

Hands on

Though the well-proportioned bells are clearly a good deal more substantial than the edge of each cymbal, the thickness tapers off gradually across the bow and there are no obvious steps down at any point. The cymbals feel balanced and of an average weight.

The 10" splash opens immediately with a bright blast followed by an instant fade. It behaves exactly as a splash ought to, giving out miniature silvery explosions that are ideal for punctuating and embellishing.

All of the Meinl crash cymbals I've encountered have been consistently good and the pair of Soundcaster Fusion Medium

crashes don't break the habit. The 16" displays a good mix of opening high frequencies that subside to reveal warmer fundamentals. Meinl claims that the design of the Fusions equips them with an 'enhanced shimmer' and there is a smoothness to the top end that lends a harmonious air to the decay.

This smoothness is also present in the 18" Medium crash. It's naturally louder and deeper than the 16", but projects a similarly clean blend of tones with great results. The bell responds well to being ridden, giving a strong, brassy note. In fact, if you required nothing more than a bell sound from a ride cymbal then the 18" would be ideal.

The single Fusion china is an 18" model with a wide upturned flange. Tapped with a stick, it answers with a dry, trashy note. Hitting it full-on brings out an altogether more violent reaction, flaring into life with a furious bark. While it's not the darkest china I've heard, it packs quite a punch.

The differing finishes make their influence felt most with the three ride cymbals. Playing the lathed outer section of the 20" Medium ride brings a light, precise stick sound above a complementary wash. Moving up onto the central portion the response is brighter and more insistent, and the wash less audible. Upon reaching the bell the sound becomes



THE FUSION RANGE
cymbals come in diameters
from 10" up to 22"

Once regarded as niche products, mixed finish cymbals are fast becoming mainstream instruments

more focused, metallic and, of course, louder.

The two Powerful rides (20" and 22") are noticeably heavier cymbals. The extra weight means that they are higher in pitch and more penetrating. Progressing across the different zones of the Powerful rides brings similar responses, with the stick sound being harder and more isolated. The bells (especially on the 22") would register on any clang-o-meter.

The only current Fusion hi-hats are a pair of 14" Mediums. Played at the edge they give a warmish, slightly fuzzy stick sound. Travelling further in the sound tightens up and becomes more cutting, though not to the detriment of overall character. A metallic edge is also present when letting them sizzle half-open, but again it doesn't dominate. Across nearly all dynamics the hats give a versatile blend of projection and tonality.

Verdict

Once regarded as niche products, mixed finish cymbals are fast becoming mainstream instruments. This set of Soundcaster Fusions shows that Meinl understands where the

market is heading and can react swiftly. Meinl knows how to make decent cymbals and the selection is up to its usual high standards, with the distinctive looks being matched by impressive sounds. My only quibble would be with the limited number of models available, but it's early days for the range yet. **R**

Rating **★★★★☆**

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