

TAMA SLP METAL SNARE DRUMS



From **£199** Could it be love at first strike with Tama's new Sound Lab Project series of metal snares?

WORDS: DAVE HOLMES

This review is the first of a two-part appraisal of Tama's spanking new SLP snare drums. Altogether there are eight snares in the SLP or 'Sound Lab Project' series, this month it's the four metal models under the microscope - a review of the wood shelled snares will follow in a later edition of *Rhythm*.

Build

The design methodology for the Sound Lab Project was to create a line of snare drums which would easily be identifiable with a particular genre or drumming style. During much experimentation, Tama's R&D people considered shell composition and thickness, rim style and type, strainer etc. The end result,

facing top flange. Tama says this design aspect will enhance the natural tone, while allowing better control over tuning.

Peering inside the 1.6mm-thick aluminium-shelled model shows a much larger pair of flanges which also protrude inwards by around 15mm, but these are part of the actual shell, forming the upper and lower bearing edges. Apart from the slight depth deficiency, the only way to tell each of these apart at a single glance is by the slightly smoky yellow hue of the nickel-plated Vintage shell.

The brutish Black Brass and comparatively cute Sonic Steel look so dissimilar it is hard to imagine these models are from the same series. The brass is the only model not to feature a centre ridge which, coupled with the

slightest tweak to get the pitch the same at each lug point. Once cranked up as near pitch-perfect, it's the 5"-deep aluminium drum that is the first to be awarded with a firm wallop. Instantly this gives a powerful and authoritative crack with little or no overtone from the head itself but, just for a split second, a satisfying ring emanates from the shell. I instantly warm to this drum as it is full of character which belies its depth - time for some funk, I think!

The Vintage Steel has a much fatter and a more open sound than its aluminium cousin, evoking a truly authentic vintage vibe. Its ready acceptance of a wide range of tuning makes this a surprisingly versatile drum but it's great for those 'loose' songs which require subtle feel where ghost notes effortlessly flow to gently blend in the gaps and not just some on-the-beat strict quantise.

The Sonic Steel cries out for reggae off-beats where a sharp tuck into the groove can give a track an amazing lilt. It would be great as a second snare beside something of contrast. Enter the brass beast... this model sits at the opposite end of the music spectrum where the dreadlocks give way to tattoos and sweat. This drum rocks, it is deep and dark and demands to be struck loudly with little finesse and where the double pedals go into overdrive. **R**

THE BLACK BRASS IS DEEP AND DARK AND DEMANDS TO BE STRUCK LOUDLY AND WITH LITTLE FINESSE

for what Tama describes as "the keystone of any drummer's sound", is a set of snares with their own unique sonic and visual identity.

While there are distinct differences between each model, there are also many common elements too. These include the snare throw-off, non-adjustable butt-end, 'hold-tight' tension rod washers and the excellent Evans single-ply batters and snare heads. Tama needed some sort of datum line which using the same heads ably provides.

Of all the snares up for review, the two which seem to be the closest in terms of build and appearance, are the Vintage Steel and Super Aluminium. Both boast retro-style brass tube lugs and include the newly designed triple-flanged 'Sound Arc' steel hoops. These were specially developed for the SLP series and feature a small inward-

relatively small Starclassic streamline nut boxes, creates an illusion that this drum is much deeper than the Sonic Steel. Upturning the bold as brass model shows off the larger-than-life 42-strand snare strainer - this time however, it is big and that is no illusion!

Particularly like the contrast of the brushed nickel of the Sonic Steel's shell against the chrome plating on each of the other metal components. These include the hi-tension lugs which form a bridge over the centre ridge and the triple flanged Mighty Hoops. With the exception of the plating and the 1" diameter reduction, the hoop design is one of the few similarities with the Black Brass model.

Hands On

Fresh from the factory, the tension is fairly tight and most of the snares only require the

Also try...



1

NATAL STEEL SHELL

We say: "Sheer bravado of the design and attention to detail bode well."



2

PEARL SENSITONE SERIES

We say: "An agreeably affordable pro-level proposition."

VERDICT: This set of snares covers just about every musical genre. It would be impossible to choose one drum over another in the review set - they are all good drums in their own right and the choice would largely come down to the particular style(s) I was playing.

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



ALUMINIUM

Snare includes triple-flanged 'SoundArc' steel hoops

Essential spec



PRICE

13"x6½" Sonic Steel, £199;
14"x5½" Vintage Steel,
£209; 14"x5" Super
Aluminium, £299;
14"x6½" Black Brass, £339

SHELL MATERIAL

Sonic and Vintage: steel;
Super Aluminium:
aluminium; Black Brass:
brass

CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Sonic Steel, Vintage Steel
and Super Aluminium:
rolled/shaped from sheet
metal with welded seams;
Black Brass: seamless

SHELL THICKNESS

Sonic Steel: 1.2mm;
Vintage Steel: 1.2mm;
Super Aluminium: 1.6mm;
Black Brass: 1.5mm

BEARING EDGE

45°

FINISHES AVAILABLE

Sonic Steel: brushed black
nickel with chrome
hardware; Vintage Steel:
nickel plating with chrome
hardware; Super
Aluminium: chrome; Black
Brass: black nickel plating

HOOPS/RIMS

Sonic Steel: Steel Mighty
Hoop; Vintage Steel:
Sound Arc; Super
Aluminium: Sound Arc;
Black Brass: Steel Mighty
Hoop

SHELL AVAILABILITY

As in review models

SUPPLIED HEADS

Batter, Evans G1 white
coated; Snare Head, Evans
Hazy 300

LUGS PER DRUM

Sonic Steel, Hi-tension
bridged: 16; Vintage Steel,
brass tube: 20; Super
Aluminium, brass tube:
20; Black Brass, Starclassic
lugs: 20

SNARE STRAINER

MCS70A throw-off,
MCS70B butt-end

CONTACT

Headstock Distribution
0121 508 6666
www.tama.com

SONIC STEEL

Sonic Steel snare cries out for reggae offbeats

VINTAGE STEEL

Nickel-plated Vintage shell has a smoky yellow hue