

MAPEX MARS SERIES KIT

£539 Birch shells, innovative finishes and colour coded hardware at budget level – Mapex's Mars series means business

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Mapex launched its Mars and Armoury series together at NAMM 2014, in the process introducing the company's SONIClear bearing edge to the drumming world. Though Mars has been used as a series name by Mapex previously, it stresses that the new drums bear no resemblance to the former range.

Build

Four Mars shellpacks are available, all of which are identically priced. On review is the Rock Fusion five-piece kit which is made up of a 22"x18" bass drum, 10"x7" and 12"x8" rack toms, 16"x14" floor tom and a 14"x6½" snare.

The shells are all-birch and are a uniform 6-ply/7.2mm across all drums. Inside they are sanded and lightly sealed and bear the classic light hues of birch. A choice of four new wrapped finishes is available, all of which are ribbed (so the vertical detailing stands proud). The result is reminiscent of artisan wallpaper, but it works and provokes anyone in touching distance of the kit to run their fingers over the drums. The low mass lugs are based on the design that was

combinations of hardware and wrap, but only as a special order which will involve a wait of 12-16 weeks. A colour matched hardware pack consisting of 600 Series pedals and stands is also available.

Mapex's SONIClear bearing edge differs to the company's existing edges by placing the peak more centrally and then cutting with a smooth rather than sharp profile. This, says Mapex, allows the head to sit flatter – increasing shell contact, so giving more tone – and also makes the drums easier to tune. The angle and cut of a drum's bearing edges is a science of its own and *Rhythm* could probably publish an entire issue dedicated to the myriad of variations and still not reach a consensus. Whatever claims Mapex has made for the SONIClear bearing edge, it clearly feels that it offers an advantage, particularly for these drums.

Hands On

In fact two different styles of SONIClear bearing edge are found on the kit. The smaller drums (snare and rack toms) are cut at 45° while those on the floor tom and bass drum are 60°, with a slightly wider point of contact. This influence is immediately

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developed for the Black Panther series while Mapex's elegant SONIClear tom mounts are fitted to the toms.

Contrasting with the off-white Bonewood finish of the review kit is the black hardware, which comes as standard with two of the finish options (the other two have chrome hardware). Mapex employs an electroplating process to coat the hardware which it claims is significantly more durable than powder coating. The black coating extends to every part of the shell hardware with the glaring exception of the two tom arms and the inner tubing of the bass drum spurs. It is possible to request non-standard

apparent as it's striking how much bottom end is offered up by the bigger drums, despite the relative thinness of the Chinese-made Remo UT heads. The bass drum, undampened and unported, is deep, powerful and remarkably focused. Overtones are almost non-existent and the swift natural decay means no tweaking is required – it's good to go as it is. Similarly the floor tom produces a big punchy note that fades as smoothly as it does quickly with the minimum of fuss.

The two rack toms hold their own in terms of volume and projection. If anything, they're a little on the belligerent side.

Also try...



1 YAMAHA STAGE CUSTOM BIRCH

We say: "Yamaha's credentials run through this kit like the words in a stick of rock. It's beautifully made and produces a quality of sound that defies its price tag."



2 PDP CONCEPT BIRCH

We say: "The standard of build, components, finish and performance of the Concept Series is exceptional, all the more so considering the pricepoint."



ADDITIONAL DRUMS

Extra drums can be ordered from Mapex to build a kit to your individual specifications

Switching the clear UT heads for coated USA Ambassadors takes the attack down a notch, allowing the note to round out without diluting the inherent feistiness of the birch.

That the kit has been built to a price is apparent with the snare as the throw-off

and butt-end are cheap and flimsy while the snare wires are unbranded and a mere 16 strands across. Despite this, the snare produces a pretty decent sound. At higher tunings the response is drier, but in and around the sweet spot it gives a thick warm note with good degree of expression. **R**

SONICLEAR TOM MOUNTS

Mapex's elegant SONIClear tom mounts – a drop down from the Saturn IV series – are fitted to the toms



VERDICT: This kit looks good, gives an assured performance and is great value. The build quality and standard of equipment is generally high with the only oversight being the puzzlingly lightweight snare fittings.

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
RHYTHMRATING	★★★☆☆



PRICES

Mapex Mars Rock Fusion kit, £539; colour matched hardware pack (600 series pedal, hi-hat stand, snare stand and 2 x boom stands), £269

SHELL MATERIAL

Birch

CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Ply

NUMBER OF PLYS

6-ply/7.2mm

BEARING EDGES

Mapex SONIClear – rounded peak with smooth backcut, 45° (snare and rack toms) and 60° (floor tom and bass drum); accurately cut

FINISHES AVAILABLE

All wraps: Bloodwood, Bonewood (as pictured), Nightwood and Smokewood

HOOPS

Triple-flanged, matching wood hoops on bass drum

SHELL AVAILABILITY

Toms: 10"x7" & 12"x8"; floor toms: 14"x12", 16"x16" & 16"x14"; bass drums: 20"x16", 22"x18" & 24"x16"; snare drum: 14"x6½"

SUPPLIED HEADS

Snare: Remo coated UX batter and clear UX snareside; bass drum: Remo clear UX batter and ebony front head; toms: Remo clear UT batters and UX resonants

LUGS PER DRUM

Snare: 8 double ended lugs; 10" & 12" toms: 12; 16" floor tom and 22" bass drum: 16

TOM MOUNTS

Mapex SONIClear; bass drum mounted

CONTACT

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