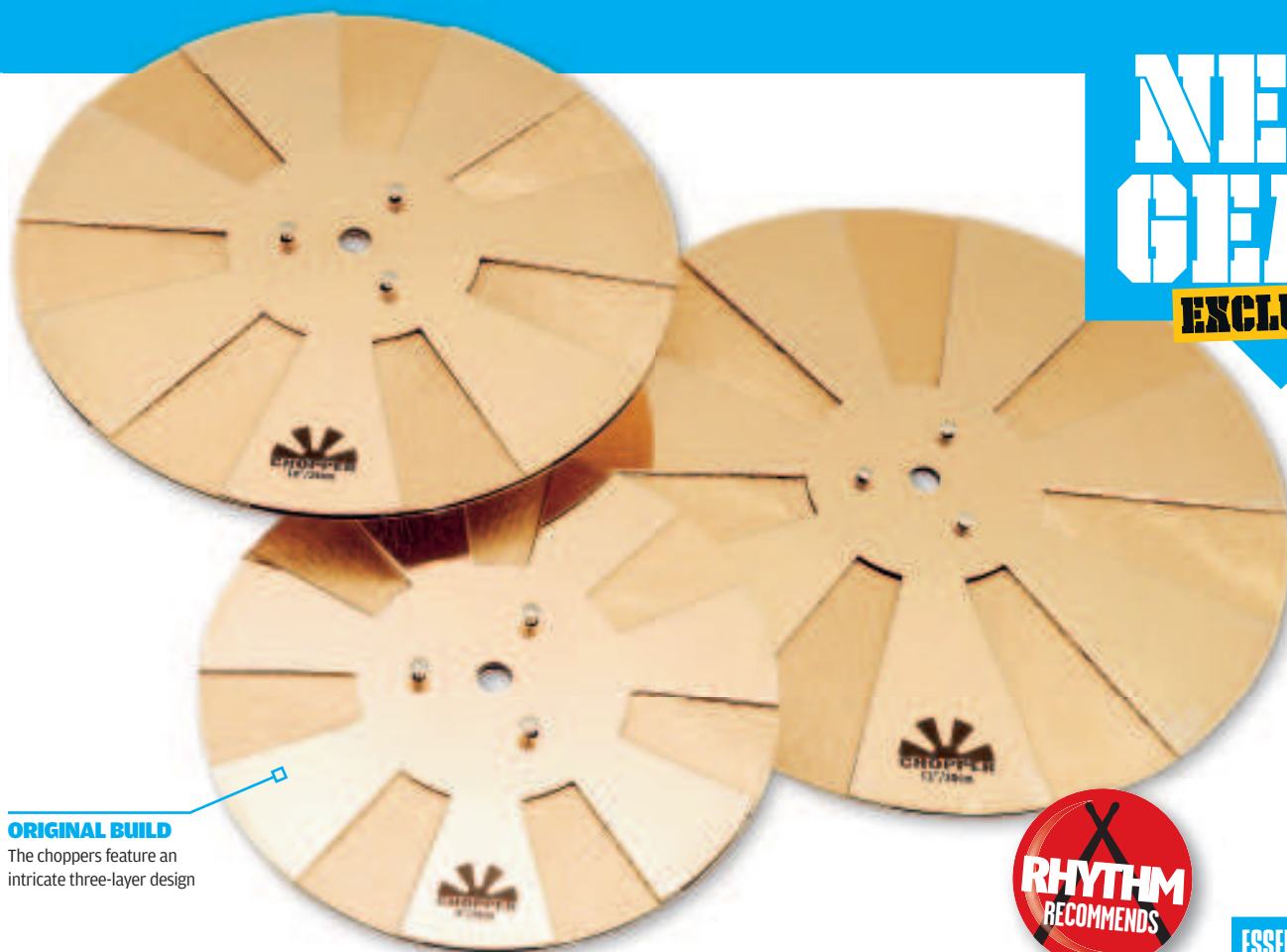


**NEW
GEAR**
EXCLUSIVE



ORIGINAL BUILD
The choppers feature an intricate three-layer design



SABIAN BELLS AND CHOPPERS

From £72 and £153 Sabian gets seriously innovative in its quest for new sounds. Adam Jones explores further

Sabian's latest additions to its Vault series are two original percussive instruments. The new models – the Alu Bells and the suggestively titled Choppers – have been designed for percussionists and kit players alike.

Build

A clue to the construction material of the Alu Bells is in the name, and each Bell is cast individually from aluminium. Unlike cymbal manufacture, the Alu Bells are cast in their completed shape using sand moulds. Available in 7" and 9" diameters, both models feature a raised dome, which leads down to a flat striking edge. The bells are quite thick but, being made from aluminium, they're

light. An absence of any kind of lathing or polishing means the surfaces are pitted and marked, but the naturally bright hue of aluminium largely masks these details from all but close-up inspection.

The Choppers, which come in three sizes – 8", 10" and 12" – are a little closer to regular cymbals, being cut from sheets of B8 bronze. There any resemblance ends though, as the Choppers feature an intricate three-layer design that has taken Sabian some time to arrive at. At the bottom of each Chopper lies a solid disc of bronze, which features swirls of textured lathing for friction-creating purposes. The next layer is a similarly textured disc, which has been cut into a seven-bladed fan shape. Above this, the final layer is also cut into a fan shape, but it's offset so that its blades overlap those of the layer below. Unlike the other two layers it's also buffed to a shine. All the fan blades are cut in a way that leaves a sharp edge pointing below each incision, again to encourage friction. This sandwich of metal is held together by three rivets that allow a few millimetres of movement, but no more.

Hands on

The Alu Bells open with a soft, dry note that oscillates

slightly. What they lack in attack they make up for in intensity. Their tone is incredibly pure and as the volume fades, the strength of the note lingers on, reminiscent of the running-a-finger-around-a-wine-glass trick.

By contrast, the Choppers produce blasts of brilliant metallic crunch. We were struck by how many nuances and subtleties could be pulled out of them. A gentle tap brings forth a crisp 'tsk', while increasing the velocity hardens up the sound. The speedy decay, which Sabian has worked hard on, makes it easy to distinguish between regular notes and accents. Their response remains clean throughout all dynamic levels and we found it near impossible to over-hit them. Also, unlike many effects, their sound didn't become wearing over time.

Verdict

Sabian has clearly let some of its most fertile imaginations loose to create these instruments. Though the designs are completely different, they represent a company on a creative roll. The Alu Bells are extraordinarily sweet-sounding alternatives to bronze variants while the Choppers' seemingly complicated design delivers an aggressive yet controllable instrument capable of many shades of expression. All the metal required for each Chopper means that they're more expensive than the Alu Bells, but of the two, the Choppers are more likely to find everyday use as add-ons. **R**

Rating ★★★★★

ESSENTIAL SPEC



PRICES

7" Alu Bell £72
9" Alu Bell £84
8" Chopper £153
10" Chopper £173
12" Chopper £187

CAST OR PRESSED

Alu Bells: cast
Choppers: pressed

ALLOY USED

Alu Bells: aluminium
Choppers: B8

FINISH

Alu Bells: raw;
Choppers: polished/
textured lathing

HAND OR MACHINE HAMMERED

n/a

COUNTRY OF MANUFACTURE

Canada

DIAMETERS AVAILABLE

Alu Bells: 7" and 9"
Choppers: 8" to 12"

MODELS AVAILABLE

n/a

SUITABLE FOR

You name it!

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