

# PEARL DECADE MAPLE SERIES KIT

**£911** Ten years in the making, Pearl's spanking new Decade Maple replaces the Vision Maple with thin, even-ply shells, new lugs and superb lacquer finishes



WORDS: GEOFF NICHOLLS

**Y**ou'd never accuse Pearl of failing to offer a wide choice, what with no less than 13 series of acoustic drums listed on its site. The Decade Maple (DMP) sits just above the Export Lacquer, ousting the Vision series. It's the cream of the mid-range kits.

For review Pearl has sent its 22" Rock Fusion pack with a line-up of 10"x7", 12"x8", 16"x16", 22"x18" and matching wood 14"x5½" snare drum. There are three alternatives, the other two being the 20" Fusion - 10"x7", 12"x8", 14"x14", 20"x16", 14"x5½" - and 22" Fusion, which is the same except with a 22"x18" bass drum. They all come with 830 series hardware and all at the same price.

Drums can also be bought separately, and unusually the line includes a 20"x14" gong bass drum. It's indicative of the way Pearl sees the DMP as a step up for the aspirational drummer. Pearl's Jeroen Breider

price range to carry a lifetime guarantee. This guarantee is significant because ever since Stagg produced the first budget Chinese maple kit back in the 1990s, the assumption has been that budget maple kits must involve a rather less durable quality of maple.

Pearl's 'normal' 7.5mm Export shell combines three 1.6mm with three 0.9mm plies. The Vision did too (with even thicker bass drums and floor toms). The thing about the new DMP is that the shells are thinner. So the DMP's maple shells are also 6-ply, but just 5.4mm thick. Each of the six plies is the same 0.9mm, making this is an even-ply shell, with the same lay-up as Pearl's Reference Pure.

The hardest rock maple from slow-growth dense inner forest trees in North America is a byword for expensive drums. You can't expect that here, but maple is maple and the timber employed here looks decent. In any case, Pearl's proprietary shell-making procedure

**YOU'D HAVE HAD TO BUY A TOP OF THE LINE KIT TO GET A FINISH THIS GOOD JUST A FEW YEARS AGO**

says, "Recently gong drums are more popular and we'd like to offer them in an affordable series. As Decade drums are perfect as a primary kit for evolving players or as a secondary 'gigging' kit for seasoned pros, it is important to offer attractive playing options. Also, Dennis Chambers enjoys playing a gong drum, and he used it in his Decade Maple promotional video [see: <http://bit.ly/DContheDMP>]."

### Build

The kit is defined by its new shells and new lugs. The big selling point is the thin 100 percent maple shells, and Pearl claims this is the first all-maple lacquered drumset in this

price range to carry a lifetime guarantee. This guarantee is significant because ever since Stagg produced the first budget Chinese maple kit back in the 1990s, the assumption has been that budget maple kits must involve a rather less durable quality of maple.

Certainly, the maple takes a finish well - the outside of the review drums is smoother than George Clooney. You'd have had to buy a top of the line kit to get a finish this good just a few years ago. And the insides are also buffed smooth, running up to the 45° bearing edges which are again as true as those of drums costing much, much more.

Pearl differs from other major manufacturers in employing the traditional method of overlapping scarf joints as opposed to the more familiar butt joints. It



### GUARANTEE

Pearl claims this is the first all-maple lacquered drumset in this price range to carry a lifetime guarantee



## SHELLS

Pearl employs the traditional method of overlapping scarf joints as opposed to more familiar butt joints

## NEW MINI LUG

Decade Maple debuts the new NDL mini-lug with squared design, contrasting with Pearl's more usual curved lugs of recent years

## HARDWARE

The included package of 830 series hardware does justice to the big step-up represented by the Decade Maple

## Essential spec



### PRICES

£911 (all configurations the same price). Drums available individually, eg: 14"x5½" snare, £143

### SHELL MATERIAL

100 percent maple wood

### CONSTRUCTION

Proprietary Superior Shell Technology (SST) with scarf-jointed plies

### PLIES

Six even plies of 0.9mm, totalling 5.4mm

### BEARING EDGES

Level and true 45°

### FINISHES

Five High Gloss & Matte Lacquer finishes: Satin Slate Black, White Satin Pearl, Satin Brown Burst, Gloss Deep Red Burst, Satin Black Burst (review); for Autumn/Xmas, three additional Galaxy Flake finishes: Ocean, Crimson, Slate (Fusion and Rock Fusion sets only)

### HOOPS

Toms/snare: 1.6mm chromed steel triple flanged; bass: matching maple ply

### SHELL PACKS

20" Fusion: 10"x7", 12"x8", 14"x14", 20"x16", 14"x5½"; 22" Fusion: 10"x7", 12"x8", 14"x14", 22"x18", 14"x5½"; 22" Rock Fusion: 10"x7", 12"x8", 16"x16", 22"x18", 14"x5½" (reviewed)

### SUPPLIED HEADS

Toms: Remo UT Clear batters; bass: Clear Powerstroke batter and Ported UT Coated Powerstroke-3 resonant; snare: Coated UT batter

### LUGS PER DRUM

New NDL lugs - bass, 16; toms: 12; snare: 8 double-ended

### TOM MOUNTS

OptiLoc mounting system and TH9001 tom holders; R-40 Air Suspension floor tom feet

### CONTACT

Pearl Drums  
00800 8424 9328  
www.pearleurope.com  
salesuk@pearleurope.com



# GEAR REVIEW

## They say...

**Jeroen Breider**

European Branding Manager for Pearl Music Europe, based in the Netherlands



### Why the 'Decade' label?

"Pearl is celebrating its 70th anniversary. We've streamlined our line-up and the Decade Maple is one of the important newcomers. It replaces our Vision Series, which was introduced 10 years ago in 2006. The Vision had all kinds of high-end features, so it was a big challenge to create a good successor. Therefore the Decade is indeed the final product of 10 years of process and material refinement."

### Top-end maple drums are extremely expensive. How much difference does cheaper maple make?

"We use our Superior Shell Technology throughout our whole range to make solid and strong shells. So although the maple wood may be different they are made with the same shell-forming process and craftsmanship. All Pearl shells will have a long life and are very sturdy. The Decade Maple shell has the same even-ply build as our Masters Premium Maple used to have, which results in a thinner shell with more resonance, more tone, more warmth and more flexibility. It's the step-up kit for those who started with Export and are ready to get serious."

creates a slight ridge, but the Superior Shell Technology (SST) method also produces accurately round shells and these measure up impressively. So all-in-all a big thumbs up for an exemplary job, particularly at this price.

The review kit is in Satin Black Burst, and if that doesn't do it for you then check out the four further High Gloss or Matte Lacquers in Satin Slate Black, White Satin Pearl, Satin Brown Burst and Gloss Deep Red Burst. Plus,

ALTHOUGH THE 16" FLOOR TOM ONLY HAS SIX-LUG HOOPS, THE RESULTING DROP IN METALWORK ALLOWS THE DRUM TO OPEN UP



### PLIES

Each of the six plies is the same 0.9mm, making this an even-ply shell



### SNARE

Snare benefits from thin shell and true bearing edges to produce cracking, ringing rim-shots

Pearl tells *Rhythm*, "For the autumn/Christmas season we have introduced three Galaxy Flake finishes in Ocean, Crimson and Slate, available in two configurations, the 20" Fusion and the 22" Rock Fusion."

The other new feature is the mini-lug, a sort of blobby square - distinctive, but less attractive to my eye than Pearl's recent curvy designs. The toms and bass drum have single-ended versions with rubber isolation gaskets. The bass drum has 16 lugs while the

### Also try...



### 1 TAMA SUPERSTAR HYPERDRIVE MAPLE

**We say:** "Huge range of kit options, excellent build quality and packed with great features at a knock-down price."

toms have 12. This means the 16" floor tom has six-lug hoops (as on the Export also), which is a budget-chasing feature and looks out of place on this otherwise classy kit. The snare has eight of a double-ended version of the new lug design.

Because the Decade Maple is a step-up kit, Pearl decided to include a hardware upgrade with each shell pack. So you get a meaty 830 series set consisting of boom and straight cymbal stands, hi-hat and snare stand, and a P-930 Demonator kick pedal with trendy longboard.

### Hands On

Setting up is a doddle with Pearl's functional, feature-packed hardware. The big story though is those shells. The maple may not be the finest cuts of a top-money kit, but

## SST

Pearl's proprietary Superior Shell Technology method produces accurately round shells

## TOP RATE FINISH

The review kit is in a super-smooth Satin Black Burst, one of five standard gloss and matte lacquered finishes



the toughened shells are 5.4mm thin – significantly thinner than those of other budget kits. Consequently, you get a more woody, resonant, ultra-clear and pithy sound – a modern sound, bright but with the middle-frequency body that characterises maple.

The two small toms ping, even when tuned down a bit to get a slappy attack. And although the 16" floor tom only has six-lug hoops, the resulting drop in metalwork allows the drum to open up. You have to be careful not to tune too low or else, as a result of that minimal lug count, the head can flap a bit. But a half-turn above that it starts to roar, and entering middle tuning the breadth of racket is more like an 18" tom. Sat behind the bass



## 2 ODERY EYEDENTITY

**We say:** "Available with various ply lay-ups including 100 percent North American maple with a choice of stunning lacquer finishes."

drum the sound is at first hard and abrupt, pretty cracky. This is misleading though because once you go out front the perceived pitch drops considerably and the tone rounds out. You realise that this is one big fat, commanding bass drum.

Pearl has thrown in a useful twin-section (33cm x 30cm) black fabric bass drum pillow muffer. It has Velcro to keep it from moving once suitably positioned. The white-coated single-ply front head is emblazoned with Pearl's logo, and sports a 5¼" (13 cm) air hole at the bottom right. You can just about get your arm in there to adjust the pillow damper.

As for the snare, I was really happily surprised. If there is going to be a weak spot in a budget kit it will surely be the

snare drum, but this one is crisp and sharp with a sweet tone. It responds evenly over the entire surface and, as with the other drums, benefits from the thin shell and true bearing edges to produce cracking, ringing, unhampered rim-shots. **R**

**VERDICT:** Drummers looking to step up a gear will love the bright, lively sound of the Decade Maple with its thin, even-ply, all-maple shells and slick lacquer finishes, guaranteed for life.

<b>BUILD QUALITY</b>	★★★★★
<b>PLAYABILITY</b>	★★★★★
<b>VALUE FOR MONEY</b>	★★★★★
<b>RHYTHM RATING</b>	★★★★★