

PEARL MODERN UTILITY STEEL SNARE DRUMS



£175 Pearl expands its affordable Modern Utility snare line

WORDS: TOM BRADLEY

Last year Pearl released a selection of five all-maple snare drums under the Modern Utility name. According to Pearl the drums were, "priced at the working drummer" and came in at around £200 each. The entry to mid-level drums came in two finishes and offered a diverse range of sizes. Check out what we had to say about them in issue 277 of *Rhythm*. This year, Pearl has expanded the line further with the addition of two steel shelled models.

Build

Unlike the original maple shells, which are available in five common sizes (12"x7", 13"x5", 14"x5½", 14"x6½" and 14"x8"), the new steel models only offer two modest choices. These are the quintessential 14"x5½" and 14"x6½", both of which come in at a suggested retail price of £175.

The 1mm beaded steel shells are blasted with a satin textured coating, which gives them a dull silvery-grey appearance – actually, a lot more alluring than it sounds. Shell hardware is chrome plated and includes Pearl's CL arch lugs, SR700 strainer and cast butt-plate, triple-flanged hoops and 20-strand snare wires. The overall silver appearance is offset subtly by gold coloured tension rod receivers that protrude from the chrome nut boxes.

Each drum employs eight of the hollow arch lugs that bridge over the raised central band. These lugs not only keep the overall weight down but also help to cut production costs in comparison to using solid cast lugs. The 6½" version not only features considerably taller lugs but they also occupy a larger relative proportion of the shell top to bottom. The throw-off mechanism is basic but works as intended and complements the style of the thin

Also try...



1 TAMA SOUNDWORKS SNARE DRUMS

We say: "An outstanding amount of drum for the money. A great choice in sizes and each one sounds fantastic. Suitable for the aspiring and professional drummer alike."



2 SJC PATHFINDER, ALPHA, JOSH DUN AND CROWD SNARE DRUMS

We say: "Despite the much lower cost, SJC's Taiwanese imports manage to uphold a good level of quality overall. These are surprisingly versatile and musical snare drums, although looks are subjective."



MASTER BLASTER

The steel shells are blasted with a satin textured coating

lugs. Supplied heads are Chinese made Remo UT with Pearl branding – single-ply coated on top and a clear snare-side.

The general build quality is high with only a couple of insignificant blemishes to the bearing edges noticeable as we cast our eyes over every inch of the drum. Edges are crimped over at a 45 degree angle, which leaves a narrow point of contact with the head, although enough to allow plenty of tone to be drawn from the shell.

Considering aesthetics alone one might be understandably fooled into thinking that these drums weigh in above their affordable price bracket, and the overall finish lends the duo an elegant appearance.

Hands On

The thin metal shells of both snares afford them an abundance of warmth with a lengthy natural decay – an expected quality from this type of drum. The deeper 14"x6½" model characterises this best with a full-bodied response that brings bags of shell resonance into play. With the snare wires loosened off a little, a mighty backbeat is unleashed, which balances the warmth and raw volume of the steel with an impressively punchy tone and a sensitive snare response. This combination makes it ideal for rock styles but also allows enough versatility to be useful in a wide range of musical situations. We find a little dampening goes a long way with this drum and one too many gels will kill off



JUST BEAD IT

The shell is constructed from 1mm bead rolled steel

HEAVY METAL

The triple-flanged hoops and CL arch lugs are finished in chrome

OFF THE DEEP END

The snares are available in 5½" and 6½" depths

the tone almost entirely. In low to medium tunings the drum is meaty, with colossal rimshots making for a formidable backbeat. In this range the overtones are harder to manage and it takes a while longer to tune out any unwanted noises. Overall, however, both drums are surprisingly easy to tune considering the eight lug count, particularly when working up to higher tensions.

The 14"x5½" model, whilst producing a predictably shorter note, still has a warm character with no shortage of ring. The drum reacts in an instant and the shorter depth makes for an incredibly delicate response with the 20-strand wires leaping to action with every whisper. With both top and bottom heads cranked tight the drum

cuts sharply with a considerable volume. Like its larger brother, this drum copes well in multiple settings which, when taking into account the low price point, makes for a winning combination. Rimshots slice through the mix and quieter notes are still prominent, making it ideal for the crisp ghost notes and penetrating backbeat required for funk styles. With the snares off, the liveliness of the shell lends itself to timbale style effects for Latin or reggae. As a result it feels equally at home as a side snare or as a main workhorse.

Although almost identical drums, particularly in the looks department, both versions bring their own characteristics to the table. If we had to pick just one, we'd

go for the 14"x5½" model, which has the potential to be a little more versatile than its counterpart. An ideal selection for a beginner looking for their first snare upgrade or a more seasoned player on the hunt for an affordable side snare. **R**

VERDICT: These drums tick a surprising number of boxes considering their extremely affordable price. With very little to fault, both models are similar yet possess their own unique characteristics.

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

Essential spec



PRICES

£175

SHELL MATERIAL

Steel

CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Bead rolled

SHELL THICKNESS

1mm

BEARING EDGES

45 degree

FINISHES AVAILABLE

Satin texture coating

HOOPS

Triple-flanged chrome

SHELL AVAILABILITY

14"x5½" and 14"x6½"

SUPPLIED HEADS

Pearl/Remo UT coated batter and clear reso

LUGS PER DRUM

8 Pearl CL arch lugs

SNARE STRAINER

Pearl SR700 strainer and cast butt-plate

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