

GEAR REVIEW

PEARL MASTERS MAPLE RESERVE MRV SERIES KIT



£2,015 Pearl once more revamps its Masters Series with two complementary lines, the Maple Reserve and the Maple Complete

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In the world of Pearl you have the Masterworks and Reference series right at the top. Designer series with umpteen choices of shells and finishes. Then you're into the Masters, a series that's been going forever and has so many variations it's easy to get completely befuddled. Now Pearl has trimmed the Masters down to just two variations - Masters Maple Reserve (MRV) and Masters Maple Complete (MCT). These are equally professional quality drums, but cheaper largely on account of the variations being restricted. In particular MRV has thin shells with reinforcing rings, while the MCT has straight sided shells.

Build

Often when drum companies say maple they mean maple with various fillers. The Masters

slopes rising up to the sharp, waxed edge, with a single-ply counter-cut.

Other differences between MRV and MCT include the MRV's 1.6mm FatTone hoops where the MCT has beefier 2.3mm Superhoops. And the MRV is bumped up to Reference-style hardware where the MCT makes do with the old Masters hardware. This means the MRV has aluminium OptiMount tom suspension, while the MCT has the heavier black, steel version.

Where the MRV edges it too is in the choice of finishes. Both MRV and MCT have just four standard colours, but the MRV has the further option, at no extra cost, of 28 special order colours taken from the Reference inventory. These range from Red Wine, through Black Gold Sparkle to Antique Walnut, to Purple Craze and so on.

THE BIG BEAUTIFUL BASS DRUM HAS MUCH IN COMMON WITH KICKS THAT WENT OUT OF FASHION IN THE '70S, BUT PEARL HAS ADDED MODERN CLARITY TO A VINTAGE SOUND

Reserve is 100 percent maple of that North American variety so beloved of drum builders. It's also taken off the same stack that Pearl uses for its Masterworks shells.

MRV is a 4-ply shell, 5mm thick, with a 4-ply reinforcing ring, top and bottom. This means the basic 4-ply shell is thinner, at 5mm, than that of the MCT, which has a straight-sided (no re-rings) 6-ply shell of 5.4mm thickness. The shells are built using Pearl's scarf-jointed Superior Shell Technology (SST) and the interiors are as attractive as the exteriors. Lightly sealed, natural honey-coloured maple with carefully finished 45°

The MRV's stock finishes are Bombay Gold Sparkle, Saphir Bordeaux Sparkle, Twilight Burst and the review kit's Matte White, which has a satin chalk appearance, but is super-smooth to the touch. It should be, as Pearl boasts a 31-step lacquering process.

Together with the four stock finishes there are four standard shell packs. Three of these have four drums (see spec box), but the fourth kit, as reviewed here, is a three-piece, 24"x14", 13"x9" and 16"x14". There's no snare to review, although standard 14"x5½" or 6½" models are listed. And there's a splendidly broad choice of 23 add-on toms (all the way



from 8"x7" to 18"x16") and nine bass drums (20"x18" to gargantuan 26"x18"), plus a 20"x14" gong bass drum.

Lugs are Pearl's familiar CL bridge design and if you're willing to pay extra you can even get your hardware nickel, black or gold-plated. Thus the MRV is veering close to the sort of personalised designer choice offered by the Masterworks and Reference series.

Hands On

Thin maple ply shells with maple reinforcement rings is a vintage lay-up. Especially when constructed the way that



TOP RATE FINISH

Review kit is in Matte White Lacquer, one of four stock finishes. There are also 28 special order lacquered finishes at no extra cost

Essential spec



PRICES

Three piece: 24"x14", 13"x9", 16"x14", £2,015; four-piece: 20"x14", 10"x7", 12"x8", 14"x12"; 22"x18", 10"x7", 12"x8", 16"x14"; 22"x18", 10"x7", 12"x8", 14"x12", £2,423

SHELL MATERIAL

100 percent North American maple

CONSTRUCTION

Pearl's proprietary Superior Shell Technology (SST) with scarf-jointed plies

PLIES

4-ply 5mm 100% maple shells with 4-ply maple reinforcement rings

BEARING EDGES

Level and true 45°

FINISHES

Super High Gloss and Matte Lacquer Finishes: Bombay Gold Sparkle, Matte White (featured), Saphir Bordeaux Sparkle, Twilight Burst; plus 28 special order colours (as available for Reference/Reference Pure Series), ranging through bursts, sparkles, fades, pearls and natural colours

HOOPS

1.6 mm FatTone chromed steel

SHELL AVAILABILITY

Nine bass drum sizes ranging from 18"x14" to 24"x18"; 17 mounted tom sizes ranging from 8"x7" to 16"x14"; five floor tom sizes ranging from 14"x12" to 18"x16"

SUPPLIED HEADS

Remo Clear Ambassador tom batters, ported Powerstroke 3 bass drum; including full-size bass drum muffler

LUGS PER DRUM

Pearl CL Bridge lugs: bass drum, 20; mounted tom, 12; floor tom, 16

TOM MOUNTS

Aluminium OptiMount Suspension System

CONTACT

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

BASS DRUM CONTROL

The large diameter 24" bass drum comes supplied with a large black fabric internal cushion which provides adaptable damping if required

GEAR REVIEW

They say...

Jeroen Breider

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



What is new/unique/special about the MRV series?

"The Masters Maple Reserve (MRV) is built with over 25 years of experience of the Masters Series. It is equipped with the best features, with thin shells and high-quality (low mass) drum hardware, producing a sound that is very musical.

"The integration of all the classic elements increases shell stability and tonal control, delivering rich, sustained lows and lively sonic punch. In short, MRV is built with the classic Masters sound in mind, enhanced with modern features and options."

What does MRV replace?

"Both the Masters Maple Premium (MMP) and Masters Maple Legend (MPL). The Maple Reserve is a combination of both, with the 4-ply 5mm shell of MMP and with the hardware of the MPL, ie: FatTone hoops. In general with MRV we've gone one step further to enhance the low mass features of Masters. This means that the combination of shell and hardware makes the MRV in comparison to the MCT more resonant, with increased sustain, but still with good projection and control, with a rich and lively sonic punch."



PRO HARDWARE

Includes Reference-style aluminium OptiMount tom bracket, serious bass drum spurs, and toms fitted with FatTone chromed steel hoops



BRIDGE LUG

Masters CL bridge lug makes minimum contact with the new shells

▶ Pearl's are, with overlapped scarf joints. This was common in shells from the 1960s and earlier. The difference with the MRV shells is the bearing edges, which were rounded in the old days, whereas these new ones are 45° and pretty sharp. Accordingly the MRV shell gives a sound which has elements of old and new. There's the warm, reverberant timbre of the thin-shelled maple, the focusing of the re-rings, plus the accurate tuning and snappy

assault enabled by the precise edges.

Although the MRV is advertised as fitted with Ambassador tom batters, this kit came with Clear Pinstripes. I admit to being a bit sniffy about twin-ply Pinstripes since their 1980s heyday passed and we all got preachy about single-ply Ambassadors and the joys of open, un-damped tuning.

But a funny thing happened. Out of the box the floor tom had been left quite slack and the Pinstripe coped fabulously well. It had a

Also try...



1 DW PERFORMANCE SERIES

We say: "Despite the accessible price for a DW kit, the Performance delivers professional quality on all fronts."

dark, rattling slap, but whereas that might be followed by a dead (slack-tuned) thump from a lesser shell, it unleashed a rounded deep and throaty roar from this one. Due no doubt to that thin, high quality build and precise edge again.

I'd normally go along with Pearl and fit a Coated Ambassador, but the Pinstripes give food for thought on both toms. They emphasise the ability of these well-made drums to cope with extra-low tuning as well as more standard mid and high.

Pearl's 1.6mm FatTone hoops are triple-flanged steel, but look more like double-flanged stick-choppers. This is because the top lip is folded over and in and then flattened, not fluted out as is usual. So your sticks are cushioned by the flattened folded steel on top of the hoop.

THE MASTERS RESERVE IS 100 PERCENT MAPLE OF THAT NORTH AMERICAN VARIETY SO BELOVED OF DRUM BUILDERS



SUPERIOR SHELL TECHNOLOGY

The MRV's new thin shells are 4-ply maple with matching maple reinforcing rings, a vintage lay-up with a warm resonant tone

INTERIORS

Interiors of the drums are as attractive as the exteriors, lightly-sealed, natural honey-coloured maple

You may never play rim-shots on the toms, but the hoops look cool and they have a touch of extra resonance which animates the drums.

Now for that big beautiful bass drum, which has much in common with the sort of kick that went out of fashion in the 1970s. A modern 18" - or 20" - deep bass drum will never produce the classic big band clout and fast tonal response of a Rich, Paice or Bonham. This is for several crucial attributes.

For starters it's a vintage size, 24"x14" - ie: large diameter with shallow depth. And second it's because of that thin maple shell with maple re-rings and the overlapping scarf build. These are the structural elements that Rogers, Slingerland and Ludwig drums had up to the 1970s. The difference again is the modern, sharpened



2 GRETSCH BROOKLYN SERIES

We say: "With its evocative name, Gretsch's USA-built Brooklyn mixes the vintage and the new while recalling the round badge era of the company's illustrious past."

bearing edges. Something which, incidentally, restorers are sometimes asked to apply to vintage drums that have uneven, rounded edges to make tuning easier. Butchery or practical sense, you decide. But Pearl has obviously done this to add a modern clarity to a vintage sound.

This is all a long way of saying that here's a drum that has a properly vintage construction, with modern touches. And yes, it translates into the desired sound. A big, loud blast, a little one-dimensional and hard because of the shallow depth. Reverberant, but with a tidy decay, as you'd expect from a shallow drum. Great for those big band - or more likely big rock - pushes and accents.

Granted there are other modern touches - the Powerstroke batter head, the front head with a mic hole, the full-sized, adjustable

internal pillow. But these don't detract, they just help to shape the basic sound to suit the circumstances. Maybe you're close miking for live or recording, etc. But you could easily go for full single-ply coated heads and felt strip dampers if you wanted to go the whole vintage hog. **R**

VERDICT: Pearl goes on tinkering with and refining its longstanding Masters line and in this latest Maple Reserve version we see a genuinely effective blend of the vintage and the cutting edge.

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