



grain underneath, adding richness and depth, while a high-gloss polish looks as smooth as glass. If I were ordering this kit, I would choose this finish in a heartbeat. Fortunately, all three finishes are available for the same price, so your budget won't stand in the way of your preference. But the Classic Walnut is so nice, I believe Taye would do well to consider offering it as a standard finish option in the entire StudioMaple line.

CONFIGURATION AND HARDWARE

The kit comes in traditional bebop sizes that include a 12" x 8" tom, 14" x 14" floor tom, 18" x 14" bass drum, and a matching 14" x 5" snare drum. It is available as a shell pack with the drums only, or

as I received it, with a full set of lightweight hardware (hardware pack G) that included a large, nicely padded throne, a bass drum pedal, hi-hat stand, two cymbal stands, a tom clamp, and Taye's SlideTrack tom mount.

Before digging into the drums, however, I want to turn the spotlight on this hardware. Taye's SlideTrack sliding bass drum mount is great, allowing you to move the toms closer to you or further away along a track, finely customizing the tom placement perfectly for drummers of varying statures.

The bass drum pedal is a solidly built, amply adjustable double-chain model that clearly is no lightweight starter pedal. It has a felt beater, which is a good choice for a bebop kit.

All the stands are single braced and not very heavy.

The hi-hat stand has rotating legs and a four-position tension adjustment that can accommodate a variety of hi-hat cymbal weights. I liked the very Remo-esque hi-hat clutch that had a locking nut to prevent

your top cymbal from dropping during a gig.

The cymbal booms had medium-length boom arms suitable for a small kit like this, and Taye even throws in an extra cymbal boom that fits into the tom-mounting post on the bass drum. I love it when manufacturers enable drummers to mount a cymbal from their tom mounts.

Another thing about the stands that I liked was the ball-and-socket tilter on the cymbal arms, tom mount, and the exceptionally lightweight snare stand. A typical stand requires going back and forth between adjusting the tilter and rotating the boom-arm angle, gradually zeroing in on the ideal position. With this system, once you've angled the cymbal or tom close to where you want it with the boom arm, you can quickly fine tune the angle and tilt with the ball-and-socket tilter, considerably speeding up your setup and making

on-the-fly adjustments a cinch.

The bass drum claws have no gaskets, which is unfortunate. I was a little surprised by this since all the lugs and PocketHinge tom brackets have gaskets between them and the shell. It has old-school L-shaped legs that fold out from the side of the drum. I think I might remove them when packing everything up rather than collapse them against the drum, lest they come loose and scratch the shell.

HEADS

Taye makes its own drumheads under the name Dynaton. All the heads seem to be of good quality. The bass drum came equipped with a clear batter head and a smooth white port-less logo head, both of which featured Taye's DRC (Dynamic Ring Control) muffling rings around the outside circumference. The DRCs made the bass drum sound too muffled for my taste, especially from the playing position. Standing in front of the kit, I didn't think it sounded as dead, and the tone seemed to blossom more. But to be truer to the bebop tradition and sound, Taye should consider using a pair of single-ply coated white heads sans DRCs, or perhaps one of each, or even create a head with a thinner DRC.

However, with the DRCs I was able to get a fat and surprisingly low sound from that little 18" that could allow the kit to easily double as a versatile jobbing kit, albeit with reduced volume. If you turned your back you might be fooled by its pitch into thinking this was a much larger drum. This is no doubt due to the thin maple shell. If you miked the drum, it could work pretty much anywhere. Tuned up, the bass drum sounded as if I were burying the beater into the head, no doubt on account of the DRCs, though the drum had nice tone throughout its tuning range.

If I were going to use this kit primarily as a portable jobbing kit, rather than a bebop kit, I might put a small port in the resonant head to help reduce the beater flutter that occurs when you play heel-up and bury the beater into such a small drum.

TOMS AND SNARE

The toms are easy to tune and the thin shells allow for especially high tuning, which is great for traditional bebop. But they can also be tuned much lower for more general use. The toms were superb and had lots of sustain and tone. They sound as good as any, and better than many.

The ten-lug snare offered plenty of crispness and tone but, being a maple shell, it had an essentially warm quality. As I mentioned before, the snare has 2.3 mm triple-flanged hoops. Hoops thinner than this can yield disappointing rim-clicks. With these I was able to get a nice clear cross-stick sound, without even needing to reverse my stick!

The SideLatch throw-off moves 180 degrees from a completely engaged position to off. While I prefer a shorter throw, this unit allowed me set some intermediate settings with the lever that held longer than I expected, and it didn't just offer on and off. It was smooth and quiet for jazz drummers who like to drop their wires for brushes or Latin grooves and then quickly re-engage them for swing tunes. I could easily tweak the fine-tuning knob with the snares in the engaged position, which is another indication of a quality strainer. I played a lot of rumba grooves and found the ring of the snare noticeable. If I were playing a backbeat-type groove, I might be tempted to use a little Moongel. All in all, I liked this snare a lot.

VERDICT

If you haven't checked out Taye's drums in person, and aren't sure of the quality, the StudioMaple drums are a great place to start. And the Bebop kit has all the superb sound and features a professional needs at a very good price. Though the finish selection is limited, all three are beautiful and stylistically appropriate for the genre. Lots of competing drum makers charge far more for kits that don't sound any better than this one. Frankly, it's hard to do better for the money. As an added bonus, Taye offers a surprisingly long five-year warranty against shell defects.