

SOUNDLAB

Taye Original Wood Hoop Drum Set

By Brad Schlueter

Taye has been making drums for a quarter century, but more recently introduced beautiful wood-hoop snare drums that have caught the eyes and ears of working drummers who appreciate a world-class instrument that can also serve as a prized addition to any serious collection. Now, Taye has multiplied that winning formula with its first full wood-hoop drum kit, and the only question I have is, "What took so long?"

Like most drum companies, Taye has several different lines of drums representing different shells, features, and budgets. This review kit is a Taye Original, which is the company's premium and priciest drum line denoted by the tasteful and classic-style round metal

badge. These kits are custom, allowing the buyer to choose shell material, sizes, and finish to ensure a fully personalized, high-quality ownership experience. This is the kind of thing that really triggers the drool reflex, so grab some napkins and read on.

OUT OF THE BOX

The wood-hoop kit I received consisted of a 22" x 20" kick drum, 12" x 8" and 13" x 9" toms, 14" x 14" and 15" x 15" floor toms, a 14" x 6.5" snare as well as an additional 12" x 8" snare, and a full set of hardware.

The finish is a black to natural burst that reveals the beautiful grain striations of the wood. The hoops have a matching black finish and the entire kit has a smooth high-gloss

lacquer. All the hardware on the shell (lugs, claws, suspension bands) has a black chrome finish, which next to the wood creates a very attractive and expensive-looking finish. The shell interiors are also finished in a black sealer (paint), which I don't normally like since I usually prefer to see the interior ply, but it does look great and enhances the overall aesthetic effect of the kit.

CONSTRUCTION

The drums have 10-ply birch shells with 4-ply maple reinforcing rings. Like Taye's maple drums, these 14-ply wood hoops are made of sugar maple, which is a harder variety of the wood prized for drum making. Speaking of the hoops, these are rectangular bass drum-style hoops, not the clawless, squarer style found on, for instance, Tama and Yamaha drums, where the tension screws pass through the hoop.

With Taye's flatter-style hoop, the lugs sit on slightly thicker gaskets a little further off the shell so the claws can come around and pull down from the top of the hoop. Fortunately, these are low-rise hoops and come only about a half-inch above the head. This is similar to a metal hoop, so you won't have to lower or tilt your drums any differently than you otherwise would, or position them further apart from one another as that other design requires. However, with this design you may occasionally hit the claw and will probably want to aim between them for your rim-clicks.

Aesthetically, this style hoop has a more classic, traditional look than squarer wood hoops do. All the shell hardware, lugs, leg brackets, and even strainer and butt plate have shell-protecting gaskets. However, none of the drum claws use them between the claw and hoop,

creating unfortunate metal-on-wood contact.

THE BASS DRUM

The 22" x 20" bass drum has rock written all over it. It's a deep, impressive-looking drum that isn't exactly, um, versatile. If you play a variety of venues like arenas (need a sub?) and coffee houses (sorry, I'm already booked), you may want to use a smaller drum for your quieter gigs.

The kick came fitted with a clear Taye Dynaton batter head that has a muffling ring around its perimeter and a similar solid white logo head. It's loud, deep, and provides a defined sound with enough low end to get the job done. For a meatier sound, a thicker head should do the trick. With the supplied heads the drum didn't require additional muffling, though I often like to port my bass drumheads to make the soundman's job easier.

The toms have to be hung from cymbal stands or a rack since the bass drum shell is virgin (without tom-mounting hardware), just as I'd expect in a custom kit of this quality. Taye doesn't use foldout bass drum spurs in its high-end kits since the company feels they rob the bass drum of resonance compared to its preferred style of springier, sculpted L-arms. The drum doesn't include a hoop protector, which seems like an oversight on a kit this nice.

THE TOMS

The rack and floor toms use suspension-mounting bands for hanging, allowing them to resonate fully. The floor toms don't use a suspension system, but that's fine in my book since floor toms rarely benefit from them. In fact, all the toms had the right amount of sustain. Peering through the clear tom heads supplied, the shells appear very thick due to the combination of hoops and rein-



DETAILS

SHELLS 10-ply birch with 4-ply maple reinforcing rings and 14-ply maple hoops.

CONFIGURATION
12" x 8" and 13" x 9" toms
14" x 14" and 15" x 15" floor toms
a 22" x 20" bass drum,
and 14" x 6.5" and 12" x 8" snare drums.

FINISH
Black to Natural Burst with
matching black hoops; dozens of
other custom finishes available.

FEATURES Wood hoops; black chrome hardware; black shell sealer on shell interior; die-cast grommets for the air-vent holes; a variety of sizes and finishes; unique shell reinforcing ring combination.

LIST PRICE
Kit with hardware \$16,700

CONTACT
Taye Drums
tayedrums.com
877-709-8293



forcing rings. The suspension bands and hoops require the toms be a little further apart than some other designs, but unless you use a really large kit it's probably not an issue.

The 1" difference in tom diameter made it easy to find each drum's natural pitch, which on each one tended toward loud, bright, and very cutting. Some toms have more thud than pitch and seem designed for you to pound out muddy jungle grooves, but this kit's clearer pitches helped me discover several melodic tom grooves that I'll use again. These toms had just enough low end and would be easy for soundmen to work with. Switching to two-ply heads would dial down the brightness and bring out a little more bass for heavier music. For most rock, this combination would work really well. If Taye ever makes a jazz version of this kit, I'd love to check out one with thin maple shells and no reinforcing rings.

THE SNARES

As mentioned, this kit came with two snare drums: a primary and an auxiliary model. The primary was a 14" x 6.5" with ten lugs/claws per head. As mentioned, since the claws sit on top of the hoops you may prefer to aim away from them when doing rim-clicks since you'll get a better sound striking the hoop. I didn't notice any hoop wear during the course of the review, although since the hoops are black they'd be easy to touch up.

The drum was lively and had some extra ring during rim-shots. I prefer snare drums to be more lively than dead since it's easy to muffle a drum (add Moon Gel, tape, or change to a thicker head), but little you can do to liven up a dead drum. The combination of hoops, shell material, and shell thickness resulted in a very sensitive drum that responded to light or heavy playing with crisp snare response and the brightness that birch is known for. I loved

playing this snare. I tried slamming rock backbeats, played marches, and threw some jazz and Latin grooves at it, and this baby handled it all with ease, and was a blast to play. This snare held a seductive power over me, and I tended to lose track of time whenever I played it. What better way to increase your practice time?

The 12" x 8" auxiliary snare was equally nice. This drum has six offset lugs/claws per head. It has a suspension mount like the rack toms, to hang it from a cymbal stand or off a rack. Despite having just six lugs, though, the drum was easy to tune high, had lots of tone, and sounded every bit as good as the larger drum. For some styles, I actually preferred it as the primary over the 14" snare.

The 12" drum had lots of woody tone and would be great for reggae, pop, or any other time you want a high-pitched snare that doesn't sound like a choked, small, or inferior snare drum. It could also work as your primary

snare since despite its small size I was still able to easily coax out good rim-clicks. Cranking the wires made the drum extra sensitive and crisp for busier playing, but like the larger snare it had plenty of ring that some might want to tame. I was surprised that the strainer and butt on each snare had a natural chrome finish rather than the black chrome used for the lugs.

Fortunately, I'm not in the market and won't have to make the difficult choice of which one to buy. But since they complement each other so well my financially reckless advice would be to buy both!

VERDICT

This kit is unique, beautiful, sounds great, and has two killer snare drums guaranteed to make you popular at any gig. So far so good. In fact, the only thing I didn't like about the kit was the price. It's just too rich for my bank account. Though, if you're lucky, not yours.