

taye studiobirch kit

by Anthony Riscica

Taye has been in the musical instrument business since 1975 but stayed mostly under the radar until the last couple of years. That's because the company was behind the scenes making drums and hardware for other instrument manufacturers until 1999. It was then that Taye decided to develop its own line of drums, based on the idea, according to TayeDrums.com, that "good drums need not cost a fortune and should be widely accessible." Today Taye has blossomed into a full-on drum company offering a wide variety of drums and hardware.

FIRST INSPECTION

The StudioBirch kit has Taye's standard rectangular die-cast lugs, which are separated from the shell by plastic risers. All of the drums except the kick came with triple-flange hoops and Dynatone drumheads, which are comparable to Remo Ambassadors. The rack toms came equipped with Taye's sturdy and sleek suspension mounts.

6000 SERIES HARDWARE

Also included with this kit was Taye's top-of-the-line, double-braced 6000 series hardware pack, with two cymbal stands, a hi-hat stand, a snare stand, a throne, a kick pedal,

easy on the eyes

StudioBirch series drums are made with 7-ply premium-birch shells, which are very well manufactured and have a smooth and uniform bearing edge. The set we received for review was done in "galaxy ice" lacquer, which is a pearly white with a subtle sparkle. I was very pleased with the finish, as was everyone else who saw the kit.

and a boom arm that slides into the bass drum mount to hold the rack toms in place. The hardware is big and beefy, so if you plan to take this set to gigs with awkward load-ins, you might want to consider something a little lighter so as not to break your back.

One piece of hardware worth special note is the throne. The seat was moderately lightweight but sturdy, with a nice wide base. The top was super-comfortable, and it sported a wide bicycle-seat shape with a velvetlike fabric that kept me from sliding around while I played.

HITTING THE TOMS

The StudioBirch toms came tuned to a medium-high tension, which suited them beautifully. They had an open, vintage-style sound that was reminiscent of some '70s Ludwig kits I've played, while the birch shells added a little more punch and volume. The attack was nice and round but had enough impact to come through in any musical style. Tuning the toms was easy, which is a testament to their smart construction.

I tried tuning down the toms to see how low they could go. They proved to have great range, but their naturally open tone meant a thicker double-ply head would be recommended for lower tunings to keep the drums from sounding thin and papery.

Because the kit came with four toms (10", 12", 14", and 16"), I could mix and match the drums to suit any performance situation. For a jazz trio gig, for instance, I used the

10" and 14" toms. I tuned them back up to medium-high, and they sounded great. Then I used the 12", 14", and 16" toms for a rock session at my studio. That combo was just what I needed. I tuned them low and found a great combination of tone and impact.

BIGGER KICK

The 18x22 StudioBirch kick is fairly large, so it's not extremely versatile. But it packs a wallop. Although I wouldn't use this drum for a jazz gig, it was perfect for heavier situations. The birch shell adds more attack than you'd normally get from a maple drum, and it serves up a good deal of low end. Even at a higher tuning I could feel the bass frequencies in my chest, although I needed some internal muffling to cut down the ring a bit. At a lower tuning, the kick sounded good both when left unmuffled and when I used just enough dampening to keep the heads from ringing uncontrollably. I preferred the latter approach, as it allowed the drum's naturally full and deep tone to push through without excessive overtones.

The kick also has some interesting hardware features. The sliding track mount is used for mounting toms on the bass drum without the need for a hole in the bass drum shell.

The kick's unique key rods/claws have plastic inserts that serve as anchors for the key rods as they sit in the claws, which prevents any metal-on-metal contact and makes tuning extra smooth.

WORKHORSE SNARE

My favorite part of this kit was the 6x14 snare. It came tuned high and sounded super-funky with a slightly choked sound. When left unmuffled, the drum rang out with a nice high tone, and rimshots sounded full. With a bit of muffling, the tone turned into a tight "crack" that reminded me of some of the sounds Clyde Stubblefield used to get with James Brown. This tight tuning worked for jazz playing too. But I found that tuning the batter head down a little opened up the drum for more sensitive strokes.

I then dropped down the tuning to medium and low tensions to see what would come out. The lower I tuned the head, the fatter the sound was, without any loss of quality. At a very low tuning, I found a heavy sound that hit me in the chest. This snare could be tuned to any tension and still sound great.

I really liked the throw-off on this drum. Unlike a lot of other designs that fall away from or to the side of the drum, Taye's flips down a full 180°. This was great because it prevented the throw-off arm from getting lodged in my thigh when I had to disengage the snares to play certain songs.

IN CONCLUSION

With a list price around \$2,700 for the StudioBirch kit, Taye is living up to its mantra of good drums not needing to cost a fortune. This set not only sounds and looks great, but it can be tuned and configured to fit just about all your needs. Add Taye's cool hardware features, and you have a pro kit with all the trimmings. If you haven't checked out Taye drums yet, now might be a good time—they're no longer under the radar.

tayedrums.com

