

CYMBALWORKS™
HANDCRAFTED CYMBALS BY DRUM GEAR

Hand hammered cymbals with Danish roots

For dark, old-fashioned handhammered cymbals, go to Turkey. Or with a small detour via Denmark to China. That's how the new brand CymbalWorks does it. Time for an introduction.

Review by: Dennis Boxem

If you listened to far eastern cymbals ten to fifteen years ago, their regular "western style" cymbals would have a bit of a dirty undertone - reminiscent of a china cymbal. And there is nothing wrong with that in itself, but they simply had not yet mastered making a more clean, even sound in China and the surrounding areas.

We already noticed that this has changed, during the test of the Stagg Genhis series. But CymbalWorks goes one step further.

CymbalWorks is a new cymbal brand, but the people behind are not, since they are also responsible for SnareWorks, Drum Gear and SlapKlatz damper gels - among other brands. So the new brand's roots are firmly anchored in Denmark, even though the cymbals are produced in China.

At the moment the brand makes these three cymbal series: Copenhagen, Casablanca and Collectables. The last one is the most

expensive of the three, and the cymbal line that we will examine in this test.

Of the three CymbalWorks series, the Collectables have been processed the most intensively. After a considerable number of smaller hammer marks, some deeper hammer marks were added to the cymbals, and then both the top and bottom were lathed.

The Collectables cymbals are all on the thin side, and if you add all those specifications together, the connoisseur will already know which way things will go with the sound: dark and warm.

Lubricity

Where in the past you could sometimes tell by the finish where a cymbal came from, this is not the case with CymbalWorks. All cymbals in the test set are perfectly finished and provided with sleek laser engraved logos. Those logos are nicely understated and have the advantage of not wearing

out or deteriorate over time. This will keep your cymbals looking beautiful for longer.

CymbalWorks keeps the range of the Collectables series simple. There are rides, crashes and hi-hats - all in larger sizes. For effect cymbals you must look elsewhere - for the time being.

The cymbals are all "on the thin side." All Collectables cymbals have the suffix "Vintage" on them, which puts them below what the competition calls "Medium Thin" in terms of weight, but just above "Thin".

With the Vintage crashes, the selection palette from the test set starts at 18". Here you already have a very nice, full crash that opens very evenly and with lots of wash. The attack of the 18" model is dark and controlled, and the sustain crackles with gritty, dark undertones. This crash is not dirty, but it is controlled and in lack of a better word: a bit 'compact'. The cymbal plays easily under your drumsticks and needs little

power to really open it up.

Multi purpose

The next cymbal is the 19" model, that is neatly in line with the 18". But with the 19" model you have considerably more body, and a considerably longer sustain. But the dark sweet grittiness that you hear during the cymbal release is irrevocably the same. The consistency is good in the test set.

It sometimes seems that 19" is the last size where you can really call a cymbal a crash. Anything above that becomes at least a bit multi purpose. The 20" vintage crash has a little bit of that too. Yes, it gives a beautiful full crash, but it does take a little more conviction to set in motion. However, the cymbal does not feel stiff as such, and still feels sensitive to play. The crash is beautifully dark and full.

It should be noted, however, that in some louder band situations, it can fall a bit short volume-wise. In that case you will have a cymbal that fills up the sound space, but with less obvious attack and definition. This model has its home turf in situations where it doesn't

get too loud: Jazz, acoustic pop - it's a bit in the light corner. But then you can use it beautifully, hence the cymbal is not too loud. Used as a light ride, and played on the surface, it gives a lovely attack with a spectacularly complex undertone.

The cup is also nice to play on. It gives a firm, somewhat distorted sound with a nice accent.

Within limits

In terms of ride cymbals, we have a choice of a 21" and 22" model in the test set. If you look at the profile of both ride cymbals, you could say that Cymbalworks simply chose to take the 20" crash, changed the profile and added some weight to it, in order to make the cymbals thicker. If even so, that shouldn't be a problem, because the changes works.

The 21" ride has significantly more attack compared with the 20" crash, and the cymbal is also easier to control. When played softly, the ride is nice, thin and crunchy. Played with a small tipped drumstick, it is really beautiful and crisp. With a little more power you get a lot more body and the sustain picks up very nicely. The cymbal builds up con-

siderably, but does not overdo it. You are in control. Even if you play with crashing quarter notes on the edge during a pop song, the cymbal is still within bounds again in no time.

Just like with the crashes, it is noticeable that the rides have that extra inch in diameter, as they go down a big step in terms of pitch. The 22" is a lot lower in pitch, yet it might still be better to ride than the 21" model.

On the surface it gives a you nice "tap" with a deep dark sustain. With a few firm taps on the edge, it opens and crashes beautifully with a fairly low pitched - and not too loud - ping on the cup. Compared to its little brother, it is dark enough that it sounds rather dry in many musical situations. The lowest frequencies quickly disappears in the overall sound stage when playing with a band, but the attack predominantly remains. A very useful sound in itself.

Muscles

Nowadays hi-hats can be bigger and bigger, which is why CymbalWorks has them in 14", 15" and 16" sizes. The 14" is nicely pointed and

smooth. Played on the edge, it has a nice crunch with a fine, complex resonance. When played at the surface, the sound is considerably shorter and thinner, which means you can vary nicely. Half open the sound is light and sweet, with a slight amount of crunch. The 14" is therefore a very musical hi-hat that feels very much at home in lighter musical genres.

The 15" hi-hat is significantly tighter. Played on the edge, it gives a wide, full "chick". When played at the surface it sounds more wet than its little brother. The hi-hat opens nice and easily to the half open position. The 15" clearly has a bit more power and a much fullbodied sound, compared with the 14" model.

The 16" hi-hat is even wider and fuller yet, which makes it ideal for a super

cool hip-hop groove or the anchor of a beautiful pop track. Semi-open accents are very spectacular; beautifully dark and very even, giving you a very long "schooooop" sound. Cool!

Conclusion

Cymbalworks impresses at this first encounter. In terms of sound, the cymbals are a bit in between Zildjian K Special Dry, Sabian HHX and Byzance Jazz - only a lot cheaper.

The finish is neat, and the cymbals from the test set are nice and cohesive. In terms of looks, these are all well made. The hand hammering in combination with the laser engraved logos looks just as chic as the cymbals sound. To put it in Danish: "Godt klart".

Links

www.cymbalworks.com
www.slagwerkkrant.nl

PROS / CONS

- + CHARACTERFUL, DARK SOUND
- + GOOD CONTROL
- + EXCELLENT VALUE FOR MONEY

- NONE