

SoundLab Nº.1

Pintech Studio Elite LE by Norman Weinberg

Details, Details

Model: Pintech Studio Elite LE Electronic Drum Kit

Price: \$1,778 as reviewed

Drums: (1) CC102ST 12" Dual Zone Snare Pad, (3) CC101ST 10" Concert Cast Single Zone Pads, (1) CKV 10" Upright Kick Drum Pad

Cymbals: (1) ZBH2 Dual Zone Hi-Hat Zenbal, (2) ZB-2 Dual Zone Zenbals

Hardware: (1) PIN5001-TS Steel Rack System with two cymbal booms and all necessary hardware

An Electronic Alternative

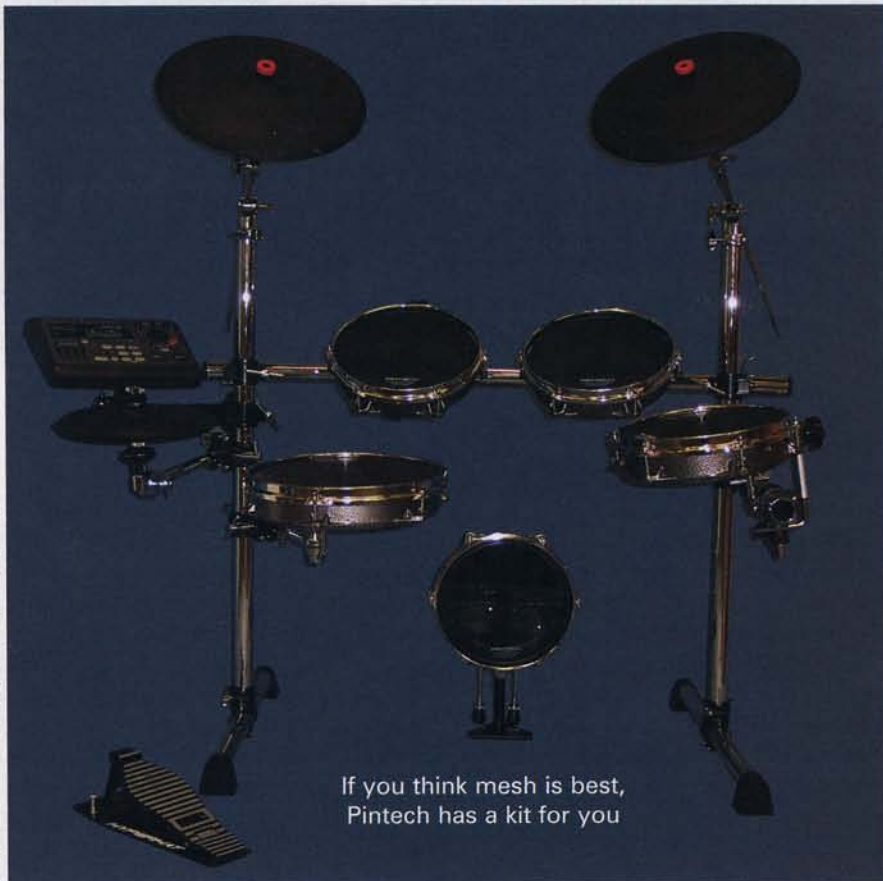
There are several ways to incorporate an electronic kit into your home or studio. One method is to buy the all-in-one system – pads, brain, and rack – from a single manufacturer. Another is to build your electronic kit from the components, selecting those parts of the system that will offer the best price-to-performance ratio, or provide the exact features you need.

Compare this idea with buying a 5.1 home theater system. Some like the idea of the ready-to-go package that contains the DVD player with amplifier, speakers, and the stand to hold them all; some like to select each part of the system individually. In the world of home theaters, going the component route will usually get you a better system and sometimes leave you with a lighter wallet. Likewise, in the world of electronic kits, you may end up with a great kit while possibly saving a few hundred bucks.

Pintech is an American-owned company that's been making electronic drums for quite some time. They don't have the brand power of the big corporations, but they do have some outstanding products that are worth considering.

For this review, Pintech sent their Studio Elite LE kit, which includes a 12" dual-zone snare pad, three 10" single-zone tom pads, an upright-style kick drum pad, and both ride and crash cymbal pads. The package also includes a rack-style stand and all the necessary hardware (clamps, memory locks, cables, keys) to put everything together.

The Triggers. One of the first things that you'll notice about the drum pads is that the heads look an awful lot like the heads of another well-known electronic drum company. Yep, those are the same mesh heads that are on Roland's electronic drums (Pintech has licensed the patented mesh head technology from



If you think mesh is best,
Pintech has a kit for you

the Roland Corporation). This means that playing these pads at 4:00 in the morning isn't going to bother anyone in the house next door. They're nice and quiet and can be tensioned so that the response of the playing surface is comfortable and natural. There are many players who have serious reservations about playing on rubber pads, and Pintech's may just win them over.

The body of ConcertCast pads is fabricated from a single piece of cast aluminum with a very hip black-with-silver-vein powder-coat finish. The shells feel solid and well constructed. Even with the aluminum, the drum is not a lightweight – there's a lot of metal to it. The protruding ears that house the tension lugs and the mounting support have been designed to insure shell integrity as a whole. Both the 10" and 12" pads have six tuning rods and a chrome triple-flanged hoop.

The L-rod mounting system can fit on any rod up to 10.5mm in diameter, and the drum comes with a large knob that makes mount attaching easy work. As an option, you can purchase heavy-duty ratchet-type LeverLok knobs for the pads.

On the bottom of the ConcertCast pads, you'll find a metal bridge system that holds the foam cylinder that contacts the woven head at its center – quite similar to the Roland PD120 pads. Head vibrations are sensed by the foam cylinder and transferred to the piezo that reacts to the movement. The dual-trigger snare pad has an additional piezo that responds to rim strokes. The CKV kick pad is a 10" pad with a bass drum pedal plate, and pair of adjustable spurs with rubber feet and retracting metal spikes for the stage.

The kit comes with two of their 14" Zebals – dual-zone, choke-compatible pads for the ride and the crash. The crash has the second trigger located under the edge of the cymbal, while the ride's additional trigger is under the bell. The weight of these pads closely resembles that of an acoustic cymbal, but the rubber surface is understandably softer than the real thing. Pintech includes Aquarian cymbal springs with the cymbals, which helps contribute to the pads' natural movement.

The HyperHat is a full-range CV controller designed as a hi-hat foot pedal. It features spring-loaded carpet spikes, non-slip rubber pads, and Velcro strips to keep the pedal secure in just about any stage situation. If you're planning to use this hi-hat controller with the Yamaha DTX modules, you'll need an adapter cable for the HyperHat pedal (available from Pintech at no cost. It's important to note that I was told by the company that a modification in 2005 will make the pedal compatible with all drum brains, eliminating the need for an adapter cable). The pedal works in conjunction with the company's ZBH-2, a stereo hi-hat pad.

The only thing that's missing from this kit is the sound module. Pintech doesn't make their own module, but the pads are compatible with any module on the market that accepts a 1/4" jack. The review kit was supplied with the Roland TD6V drum brain, and I also put the kit through its paces with a Yamaha DTX brain, and a drumKAT multi-pad triggering a computer running Reason and GigaStudio.

The Rack. Pintech's new chrome rack is simple, strong, and easy to use. Two vertical

bars provide support for the curved cross bar and serve double-duty by holding the cymbal arms with booms. Four additional arms provide mounting for the floor tom, snare, hi-hat, and sound module plate. It might be odd to see the snare arm supported by the same cross bar that holds the two rack toms, but this system actually works very well. Once the snare and rack toms were in their proper position, it was easy to get everything else exactly where it belonged.

Instructions. Since Pintech doesn't manufacture the sound modules that serve as the trigger and audio brains for these kits, you'll have to connect the pad to some sort of electronic drum kit sound module. The company has included instructions for interfacing to a number of the most common electronic drum kit brains, i.e. the Roland TD6 and TD8, Yamaha's DTX2.0 and Alesis' DMPro, D4, and DM5 modules. There are also instructions (with photos) for setting up the rack, hi-hat, L-rods, and even the cymbal springs. If you can't put this kit together with these instructions, you probably shouldn't be playing a musical instrument.

Impressions. The single-zone pads responded well and could track my lightest stroke (of course, the brain that you'll be using with the kit handles most tracking responsibilities). That being said, the ConcertCast pads offer a strong enough trigger signal to drive any system. The head trigger on the double zone pads responded just as well as the single zone units, and I had no trouble getting the rim trigger to react with both light and heavy strokes.

The isolation between the head and rim triggers was outstanding. My strongest strokes didn't cause any crosstalk problems. Although some vibrations passed between pads through the rack when I set the sensitivity to the lowest possible setting on the supplied TD6, it was easily fixed by adjusting the sensitivity to a more realistic level. Once properly adjusted, there were no crosstalk issues (and I play with a pretty heavy hand).

The kick pad also responded well to my playing. If anything, the head felt a little too bouncy right out of the box. I relaxed the tension of head slightly, and it then felt more like an actual bass drum.

While the Zebals worked fine in terms of response and sensitivity, I was less impressed with the feel of these instruments under my sticks. While not reviewed, there

are other members of the Pintech family of electronic kits and triggers. They also offer the Visual Custom Series of custom made electronic pads with acrylic shells, the Studio Elite series rubber pads, the AcousTech metal snare pad, a 6" and 12" tubular bar pad, the Trigger Perfect line of acoustic drum triggers, and the entire line of Visu-Lite electronic cymbals.

All Pintech pads carry a lifetime warranty. This is one of the strongest warranties in the business, and Pintech is to be congratulated for standing so strongly behind their products. If any part fails due to a defect in material or workmanship, they will repair or replace it for free. After one year, you'll be responsible for labor costs, but that's to be expected.

Pros. While this is not a comparative review, it's difficult not to compare the Pintech mesh-head pads to the similar mesh-head Roland pads. The bottom line is that these pads offer an exceptional value. In terms of factory list prices, a single-zone 10" Pintech pad goes for \$168. Its mesh-head competition retails for \$420. You do the math. Going the component route can save you some serious bucks.

Since both companies use analogous technologies, the feel, response, and sensitivity of the pads are also similar. Saving dollars wouldn't be important if quality was an issue. There are enough issues with electronic percussion already, and nobody wants a pad that's going to fail on the gig. Quality of construction is certainly not an issue with these Pintech pads.

Cons. About the only negative aspect of the ConcertCast pads is the exact same technology that makes them so responsive. As mentioned earlier, the pads have a cylindrical foam sensor that contacts the center of the mesh head. This creates a "hot spot" right at the point where the foam touches the head. If you normally play a little off-center, then this won't be an issue and the pad will respond to all dynamic levels, but if you put a stroke right on the foam, moderate playing velocities will trigger stronger than normal attacks.

Final Word. Before you drop your dimes on a new electronic kit, go play the Pintech instruments. If you're convinced that mesh head technology is the way you want to go, it's smart to have a choice of manufacturers. They are an outstanding value – quality construction and quality performance at a reasonable price. 🙌