DIALED IN

The flagship of Yamaha's DTX series, the DTX562K. ▶

Yamaha DTX502/562K Electronic Kit

By Norman Weinberg

Yamaha's newest family of electronic kits is built around the DTX502 Drum Trigger Module. There are three different models in the series — the 522K, the 532K, and the 562K. As the numbers increase, additional features such as a real hi-hat pedal and more sophisticated pads are added to the mix. Yamaha sent us the 562K for review and I put the kit through its paces.

PADS

The 562K includes the XP80 snare pad, and three XP70 pads for the toms. These pads are more sophisticated than you might expect from a kit at this price point. XP pads are made with what Yamaha calls "TCS" for Textured Cellular Silicone. The system uses a free-floating design that helps make the pad

DETAILS

MODEL DTX562k

MSRP/STREET PRICE $3,225/$1,799

FEATURES

Max Polyphony: 32 notes

Effects: 9 Reverbs, 1 Master EQ

Kits: 50 factory, 50 user

Sounds: 691 drum and percussion sounds, 128 keyboard sounds

Songs: 37 practice songs, 22 pad songs, 40 user songs

Sequencer: 104k notes

Resolution: 96 ppq

Sequencer Type: SMF

Trigger Setups: 14 preset, 16 user

Inputs: Aux In, hi-hat control, 8 trigger

input jacks

Outputs: Headphone, main stereo L/R

Computer Connection: USB

User Samples: 20 maximum

Sampling Time: 12 seconds mono

Sampling Format: AIFF, WAV

Rack: RS502

Pads: 1 XP80 (three-zone), 3 XP70 (two-zone), 2 PCY135 (three-zone), 1 RHH135 (two-zone), 1 KP65 Kick Pad

Hardware: HS650A hi-hat pedal

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feel more like an acoustic drum and produces less attack noise when struck. The XP80 snare pad can create three unique sounds based on the stroke position: head shots, open rimshots, and closed rimshots. This is accomplished by having two unique rim locations: one closer to the player for the open rimshots and another on the far side of the player for the closed style. While XP70 tom pads will produce only one sound, the tom inputs are "dual mono inputs" — essentially stereo inputs intended to be split with a stereo TRS>dual mono adapter to access optional trigger inputs 10, 11, and 12.

The cymbals included with the 562K include two PCY135 pads that are capable of playing distinctive sounds from the bow, the bell, and the edge. The PCY135 pads also respond to choking (grabbing the edge right after striking), and muting (striking the pad while holding the edge). The two-zone RHH135 hi-hat pad is responsive to bow and edge strokes, and when mated with the DTX502 brain, supports open/closed, foot-closed, and foot splash playing.

HARDWARE

All kits within the series are supplied with the RS502 rack. It's important to note the all-metal construction of the tubes and struts and the fact that the rack has four vertical legs for additional stability and strength. The kit comes with a hi-hat stand, and ball-and-socket snare holder. The whole rack system weighs only a little over 18 pounds, but I found it to be plenty sturdy and was able to put the pads exactly where I wanted them.

THE DTX502 MODULE

As mentioned earlier, the DTX502 serves as the centerpiece of each of the kits in the family. There's good reason for this! The DTX502 module has just about everything you might need in an electronic kit brain: plenty of features, ease of use, and expandability.

The top of the DTX502 is an ergonomic dream. An LCD screen that displays two 16-character lines dominates its face, along with a good-sized data wheel for inputting values. On the left side, you'll find three buttons for editing and selecting: kit, song, and play/stop. If the "shift" button is depressed, the function of those three buttons change, and leads to the controls for training, recording, and muting the drums during playback.

On the right side are buttons for volume, cursor left and cursor right (to select parameters), and save/enter. Again, holding down the shift button allows you to access the click and editing menu. It's also convenient that the headphone and auxiliary input jacks are on the front rather than in the back.

The back of the brain is simple and to the point, with individual inputs for snare, kick, three toms, crash, ride, hi-hat, and hi-hat

controller. In the output department, there are main left and right .25" jacks. Of special note is the USB jack that can be used to connect the DTX502 to your computer or other device with USB capability.

SOUNDS, KITS, SONGS

The DTX502 brain comes out of the box with 691 drum sounds that serve to cover not only a full range of acoustic instruments but a good deal of contemporary sounds and colors. The voice list includes 48 kicks, 126 snares, 76 toms, 92 cymbals, 104 hi-hats, 127 percussion sounds, and 118 effect sounds. Yamaha states that some of the sounds originated with third-party VST companies and that those sounds were then optimized for this brain. The end result is a very strong library of impressive sounds.

In the kit department, the DTX502 module comes with 100 available kits (50 factory kits along with 50 user kits), which cover a very large number of important styles for today's drummers. Of course, you can create your own if you desire, but the factory kits will serve you well for the majority of your practice and gigging.

Just about every e-kit on the market has a number of play-along songs that can be called up to teach the user musical styles or offer the simulated experience of playing with a group of musicians. The DTX502 contains 37 different songs that can be used for practice, and the songs are good. They are stylistically accurate, fun to play, and sound better than many other kits' play-alongs.

Since the unit has a USB connection, you can connect the DTX502 to your computer and load in additional sounds, kits, and play-along songs. You can upload and download user kits and user songs, and even upload your own samples (up to ten seconds in mono). But the biggest advantage of the USB port is the ability to connect the kit to your computer, iPad, or other USB device for music creation. Once you connect the DTX502 to your laptop, an entire universe opens up of sounds, kits, and songs you can interact with.

TRAINING MODES

Yamaha kits have long been known for their educational capabilities, and the DTX502 is no exception, with eight totally different methods for making you a better player. Groove Check, Rhythm Gate, and Measure Break are designed to help you with your timing; Pad Gate and Part Mute help you learn beats and patterns; Fast Blast tracks your speed; and Tempo Up/Down and Change Up offer exercises to improve your technical skills. Personally, I really like the Rhythm Gate feature, where playing inside the gate range will produce sound, but playing too early or late will not produce sound. This is quick and easy aural feedback to your rhythmic accuracy, and with a tight gate, it's a real challenge.

TWEAKS

The DTX502 offers up a huge set of controls that can be used to tweak any sound. Editing is done inside of eight different menu areas: mixer, kit voice, kit common, kit job, pad area, trigger area, training area, and system area. In programming terms, this is a pretty clean way to organize a large number of parameters and variables.

Perhaps the most flexible option is the ability to assign any pad to play two sounds for each stroke. In addition to a basic two-sound layer, there are nine different types of crossfades that fade one sound out while the second sound fades in, depending on the player's dynamic. One additional option sets up a pure velocity switch with a user-defined switch velocity.

Each sound is programmable in terms of its volume, tuning (a four-octave range in ten-cent increments), stereo panning (128 different positions), decay, filter cutoff frequency (given as a relative value rather than a precise frequency), and the reverb send amount.

Other features include the ability to turn Hold Mode off and on, and assign a pad to a specific alternate grouping. When Hold Mode is turned on, each strike of the pad will alternate between a note-on and a note-off message. This is prefect for launching and stopping loops. When two sounds are assigned to the same alternate group, playing one pad will cut off the sound of the other pad. While this is used primarily for hi-hat sounds (playing a closed hi-hat will stop an open hi-hat), it can be creatively applied to other sounds as well.

There are also a number of options that can be configured for the MIDI output when the pad is struck. You can select the MIDI note number, the MIDI channel, and the MIDI gate time (to determine the length of the MIDI note-on message).

In terms of trigger adjustment, the DTX502 is extremely flexible. Each trigger can have its own velocity curve selected from 25 different choices. Each trigger input has adjustable gain, minimum level, minimum velocity, reject time, wait time, noise floor, and crosstalk. No matter your playing style, there are enough adjustments and variation here to satisfy even the most discriminating touch and rid the rig of any double triggering, sound skipping, crosstalk, or other such electronic gremlins. **DI**