

# PLUGGED IN



## ELECTRONIC DRUM-SET BUYING GUIDE

BY **NORMAN WEINBERG**

**W**elcome to the revolution. Electronic drums are becoming more and more popular because not only do they allow you to practice without neighbors calling the cops but they also look, sound, and feel better than ever before. Want to get your sticks on a kit but not sure where to start? Follow along as **DRUM!** gets you plugged-in.

First off, a complete electronic kit is a multipart system that includes the following: the pads that you play, the rack or stands that hold the pads, and the all-important drum module (or brain) that generates sounds.

**PADS.** Pads come in a variety of sizes and materials – everything from acoustic wooden shells to custom-designed hi-tech plastics. The first important feature to consider is the number of independent triggers on a pad. A single-zone drum pad can read strokes from only the head surface. A dual-zone pad can interpret strokes on both the head and the rim. And a triple-zone pad recognizes head and rim strokes as well as a cross stick. Cymbal pads too come in single-, dual-, or triple-zone versions, and some higher-end models even have a choke feature.

Another important characteristic is a pad's striking surface (i.e., the part of the pad you'll actually

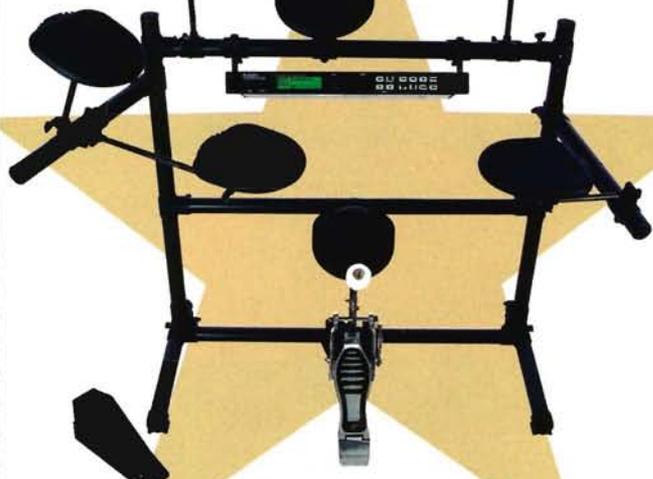
be hitting). There are two primary options for drums – either a rubber surface or a conventional-type head. Usually pricier, conventional-type heads come in either a Mylar or a mesh style.

**RACKS.** Nearly every kit features a rack, so construction quality and setup flexibility should be your primary concerns. You want a rack to be sturdy and to hold your pads where you like them. You don't want a rack to transfer vibrations from one pad to another.

**MODULES.** Here is the general rule: the more expensive the module, the better and more numerous the samples. Ultimately, though, the best drum brain is the one that has the sounds you will

use. It doesn't matter if 72,000 snare samples are available if you only like one of them. Judge a brain by the quality and usability of its sounds and the number of additional features that you may want – extra trigger inputs for expansion, advanced sound-editing features, individual audio outputs for studio work, onboard processing for special effects, advanced MIDI capabilities, or the ability to read your own samples.

Not every manufacturer listed here offers complete kits. In production today, there are 21 models that come with both pads and brain. If you're inclined to get your pads from one company and your module from another, you'll have another 17 choices. >>>



## ALESIS DM5

PRICE \$699

This kit caused quite a buzz at the 2006 Winter NAMM show. It's a complete electronic set with a street price of around 500 bucks. The kit consists of five drum pads (one of which is used as the hi-hat surface), two natural-motion cymbal pads, a hi-hat controller pedal, bass drum pedal, tubular rack stand, and the DM5 drum brain with all the necessary cables to get you up and playing in no time.

The DM5 brain has been around for nearly ten years. It's a single

rackspace machine with 12 trigger inputs. It contains 540 drum sounds that can be combined into 21 kits with 16-voice polyphony. The DM5's sounds were recorded in 18-bit stereo at 48kHz – some dry and some with effects. There are two stereo pairs as outputs, making the unit more versatile in the studio. The DM5 also includes Alesis' Dynamic Articulation and random-sample features, which allow the unit to track and vary the volume, tone, and pitch of a player's strokes.

## ASTRO AXE-580DS (Distributed by Taye Drums)

PRICE \$995

Just as we were going to press, Taye drums contacted us about their distributing a new electronic kit that should hit the market in June. While we haven't put our sticks on these drums yet, the 5-piece kit features tension-adjustable pads with replaceable conventional drumheads. The pads look very similar to Remo practice pads. Three 12" cymbal triggers and a hi-hat foot pedal complete the cymbal options. The rack is a steel tube-style system that offers a good degree of flexibility in position and angle of instruments.

Called the AXE-800DM, the brain that comes with this kit seems to be identical to the EZ Module offered by Pintech.



MICRO BOP

## BOOM THEORY

Boom Theory is a pro-level custom shop that offers Space Muffins electronic drums. The unique kits look like regular acoustic drums and incorporate what the company calls a Digital Trap Set Baffling System (Digi-Trap) that keeps false triggering at a minimum. The prices listed below are for the drums alone, so you'll need to pick up a brain separately. Because it's a custom shop, Boom Theory can do just about anything you want – sparkle finishes, powder-coated lugs and hardware, and many other options. As owner Al Adinolfi says, "All things are possible if you have enough cash."

### MICRO BOP

PRICE starts at \$1,699

The Micro Bop is a 5-piece kit that includes a 12" x 4" dual-zone snare, a 16" x 10" bass drum, and three toms (8" x 4", 10" x 4", and 12" x 4"). It has a PVC wrap finish and all chrome hardware.

### BOP DIX

PRICE starts at \$1,850

The Bop Dix offers a 13" x 3.5" dual-zone chrome snare, a 18" x 14" kick drum, 8" x 8" and 10" x 8" rack toms, and a free-standing 14" x 14" floor tom.

### THE CLASSIC

PRICE starts at \$2,299

This is Boom Theory's most popular kit and includes a 13" x 2.5" dual-zone chrome snare, a 22" x 14" or 22" x 16" bass drum, 10" x 9" and 12" x 9" rack toms, and a 15" x 14" floor tom.



## DDRUM DDRUM4 SE

PRICE \$3,595

The 4SE is a 5-piece kit using cast-aluminum pads with mesh-style heads for snare, toms, and bass drum. There's also a pair of two-zone cast cymbals and a cast hi-hat that fits on a normal stand.

The SE brain features custom samples by Dennis Chambers, Kenny Aronoff, Mel Gaynor, and Simon Phillips. In addition to these signature sounds, there are over 1,100 sounds available on an included CD-ROM. It has a flash memory system for downloading even more samples. There are ten trigger inputs, four of which can read pressure. There are 73 factory kits in ROM, and you can store 24 user kits. A unique Ddrum feature is the ability to respond to 1,000 steps of dynamics.

## HART DYNAMICS

Hart's Acupads come in four basic models: a 10" dual trigger, an 8" dual trigger, an 8" mono trigger, and an 8" bass drum. They all feature a black matte finish and a fully tensionable head. The TE3.2 (Transparent Energy Transfer) model pads incorporate Hart's Kontrol Screen Magnum mesh-style heads for nearly silent playing, and the shells are constructed from a steel-reinforced polycarbonate (bullet-proof plastic) to ensure durability. The Professional series snare pad features a 13" hand-hammered NOREZ custom chrome-steel shell with eight tuning lugs. The tom pads come in 8", 10", and 12" models with four- or six-lug tuning. In addition to the hammered chrome,

### PRODIGY

**PRICE \$869**

Hart's entry-level kit includes five single-trigger Prodigy pads, 14" ride, 12" crash, and hi-hat cymbals with a Studio Switch hi-hat pedal. All necessary cables and utility-rack components are included.

### VIRTUOSO

**PRICE \$1,599**

The Virtuoso kit includes an Acupad 8" dual-trigger snare, along with three single-trigger 8" toms and the 8" upright kick pad. For cymbals, it comes with a 12" crash with choke and a 14" crash/ride with choke. The hi-hat system is the Ecymbal VT with Hart's fully variable hi-hat pedal.

### STUDIO MASTER

**PRICE \$2,099**

The basic Studio Master kit includes a 10" dual-trigger snare along with three 10" dual-trigger toms and an 8" bass drum. With this kit, you'll get a 12" crash, 16" ride, and 12" hi-hats from the Ecymbal Studio line.

### STUDIO MASTER 5.3

**PRICE \$2,699**

The Studio Master 5.3 upgrades the snare to a 13"

the tom pads are available in a Piano Black lacquer finish. A 13" bass drum pad rounds out the series.

Hart produces two lines of acoustic-style electronic cymbals in a wide variety of types and sizes. The Ecymbal S (Studio) pads include crashes, splashes, and Chinas in a black satin finish. The Ecymbal II (Brilliant) line features a Duro-plate gold-mirror finish on all the pads.

Hart also offers a complete line of rack stands at two different levels of price and durability. The HDI line is their heavy-duty series of stainless-steel rack tubing, while the Utilite components are made from urethane-coated carbon-steel tubing.

The prices for each kit do not include a module.

Professional model with floor stand and adds the Epedal II pro hi-hat stand.

### STUDIO MASTER 6.4

**PRICE \$2,999**

This kit includes a 14" crash with choke and adds another 10" tom.

### MEGA PRO

**PRICE \$3,299**

The Mega Pro is a 5-piece kit with Professional series snare and Acupad toms and kick. It includes a 12" crash, 16" ride, and 12" hi-hats from the Ecymbal II series as well as a Hartware stainless-steel rack.

### GIGA PRO

**PRICE \$3,799**

The Giga pro adds an additional tom and a 14" crash cymbal.

### PROFESSIONAL 5.3

**PRICE \$3,899**

Hart's top-shelf series offers Professional pads for all drums. The includes a 13" snare, two 10" toms, one 12" tom, and a 13" kick along with 12" hi-hats, a 16" ride, and a 12" crash.

### PROFESSIONAL 6.4

**PRICE \$4,699**

The Professional 6.4 adds a 14" crash and another 12" tom.



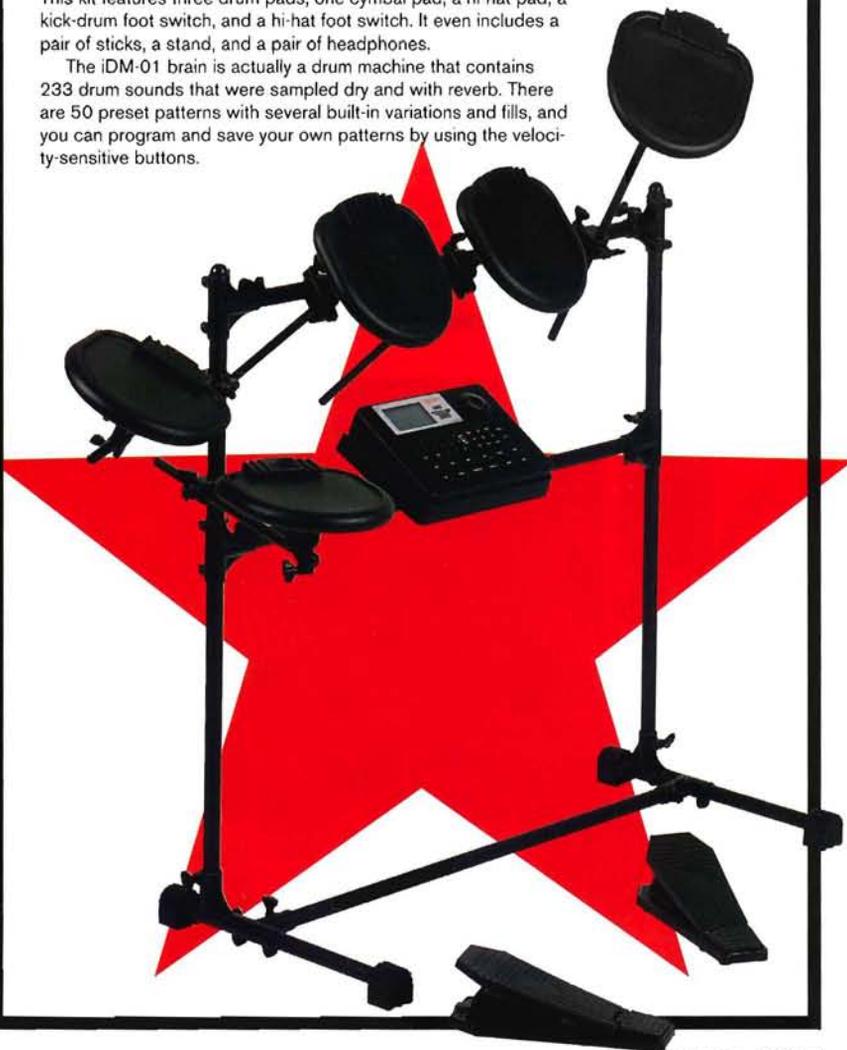
VIRTUOSO

## ION AUDIO IED01

**PRICE \$499**

This kit features three drum pads, one cymbal pad, a hi-hat pad, a kick-drum foot switch, and a hi-hat foot switch. It even includes a pair of sticks, a stand, and a pair of headphones.

The iDM-01 brain is actually a drum machine that contains 233 drum sounds that were sampled dry and with reverb. There are 50 preset patterns with several built-in variations and fills, and you can program and save your own patterns by using the velocity-sensitive buttons.



# PLUGGED IN BUYING GUIDE



ROAD PRO

## PINTECH

Pintech has a number of different pad models. At the top of the list is the Acoustech pad. It's a 14" drum available in chrome, white, or black with dual-zone triggers (head and rim), woven mesh-style heads, and 12 tension lugs. Pintech's ConcertCast pad is a one-piece cast-aluminum shell with a silver vein powder-coat finish. The ConcertCast kick pad is an unbalanced design with memory locks for the spurs. Pintech also offers a complete line of hi-hat pedals, bass drum trigger pedals, and the unique Nimrod and Dingbat tube-style pads.

Pintech's cymbal offerings include the PC-series dual-trigger units and the TC-series single-zone instruments. They also have the

ZB14 Zenbal series. These 14" rubber cymbal pads are offered in single-, dual-, and triple-zone configurations. Finally, the Visu-Lite cymbal line offers a full complement of hi-hats, rides, Chinas, chokable crashes, and single-zone crashes. The Visu-Lite series comes in 11 different colors.

Pintech offers the EZ Module brain as an entry-level unit. It features eight trigger inputs and a hi-hat input that controls open and closed sounds. The 389 instrument and special-effect samples can be combined into 20 preset and 10 user-defined drum kits. The module also includes 50 preset songs and 4 user-song locations.

## ECHO

**PRICE \$1,088**

Without a doubt, this is a unique kit. It is composed of seven Dingbat pads, a kick trigger, a Gig hi-hat switch pedal, a rack, and the EZ Module. It's sure to grab a few double takes from audience members.

## E-GIG

**PRICE \$1,273**

The E-Gig 4-piece kit features three 10" ConcertCast pads and an 8" ConcertCast bass drum pad. Cymbal pads include the TC series 14" ride, 14" crash, and 10" hi-hat. The kit includes all necessary hardware and cables along with the hi-hat control pedal and the EZ Module.

## ESCAPE

**PRICE \$1,177**

This is a 4-piece kit with three 10" dual-zone ConcertCast pads and an 8" kick pad. The cymbal components include two 14" TC cymbal pads and a PC10 hi-hat pad.

## E-JAM

**PRICE \$1,480**

The E-Jam adds another 10" dual-zone ConcertCast pad. The ride cymbal is upgraded to a 16" model with a separate active bell area.

## E-SESSION

**PRICE \$2,400**

The E-Session kit includes three 10" ConcertCast

toms, a 12" pad for the snare, and three Zenbal cymbals: 14" crash, 14" ride, and 10" hi-hats. A 10" bass drum pad, the Hyperhat pedal, and an all-steel rack complete the kit.

## T-REX

**PRICE \$3,300**

The T-Rex comes with four 12" ConcertCast toms, a 12" kick, and a 14" Acoustech snare. It features four Visu-Lite cymbals: 13" hi-hats, two 16" dual-zone crashes, and an 18" dual-zone ride. The kit comes with a Gibraltar rack and additional Gibraltar hardware.

## ROAD PRO

**PRICE \$4,000**

The 6-piece Road Pro features two 10" and two 12" ConcertCast pads for toms along with a 14" Acoustech snare. Cymbal pads include Visu-Lite 13" hi-hats, two 16" crashes, and an 18" three-zone ride.

## ACOUSTECH

**PRICE about \$699 for the conversion service**

Here's the scoop. Order a kit, shell pack, or individual drum from any Pearl dealer, and then add the Acoustech conversion option. The kit will then be shipped to Pintech. After mounting the electronics, Pintech will ship the converted instruments to you.



San Jose's Original Pro Drum Shop

1427 The Alameda  
San Jose  
California 95126  
408-286-9150

*Play now! Pay later!*  
Lemmon Percussion now finances!

★★★★★  
A MEMBER OF THE  
FIVE-STAR™ NETWORK

Visit us online at:

[www.drumsusa.com](http://www.drumsusa.com)

**We'll match or beat anybody's prices!**

Bosphorus • Gretsch • DW • Yamaha • Sonor • Tama • Pearl • Pork Pie • Ludwig • Pacific • LP • Toca • The Rhythm • SKB • Rhythm Tech • Aquarian • Black • Sabian • Percussion • Grover • Tréeworks • Gibraltar • Roland • Vic Firth • Pro • Vater • Audix • Evans • Sabian • Zildjian • Tréeworks

California Percussion • Paliste • Ramo • Malletech Real Feel • Protection Rackel • Innova • Rymes • California Percussion • Paliste • Ramo • Malletech Real Feel

## R.E.T. PERCUSSION

R.E.T. was created with a vision to merge acoustic and electronic drums. Each drum is custom built with an acoustic look and feel, using real shells, real hardware, and real heads. The drums come in six custom-stain finishes (Natural Maple, Custom Honey, Custom Cherry, Ocean Blue, Classic Walnut, and Mirror Black), and you can design your own finish for an additional fee. All R.E.T. drums use a proprietary muffling system that the manufacturer claims reduces the sound level of the drum to 60db while offering the player more natural dynamics and stick bounce. Dual-zone snare and tom pads are created from 13" x 5" maple shells with separate triggers on the head and on the rim and Neutrik connectors. The bass drum shell is the same size but is a single-zone instrument. R.E.T. kits come with Smartrigger cymbals, which are made from a brass-alloy covered layer that helps keep the trigger quiet. The ride cymbal is a dual-zone unit with triggers under the bell and the bow. Hi-hats are designed to mount on any regular hi-hat stand and are compatible with any Roland brand hi-hat controller. Listed prices are for pads and racks only.



NS2 PRO-CX

### THE JAZZ-E PRICE \$3,495

This is the newest addition to the R.E.T. family. It's a 4-piece kit with a dual-zone crash and the triple-zone ride cymbal.

### NS2 PRO PRICE \$3,995

This kit includes four dual-zone drums along with the bass drum unit. Smartrigger dual-zone hi-hats, a 13" crash, and a 16" ride make up the metal offerings. A double-braced snare stand, a

custom curved rack with adjustable mounts, and all necessary connecting cables are included.

### THE NS2 PRO-CX PRICE \$4,455

The CX adds an extension arm to the rack for more stability and a second 13" dual-zone crash cymbal.

### THE NS2 PRO-EX PRICE \$4,895

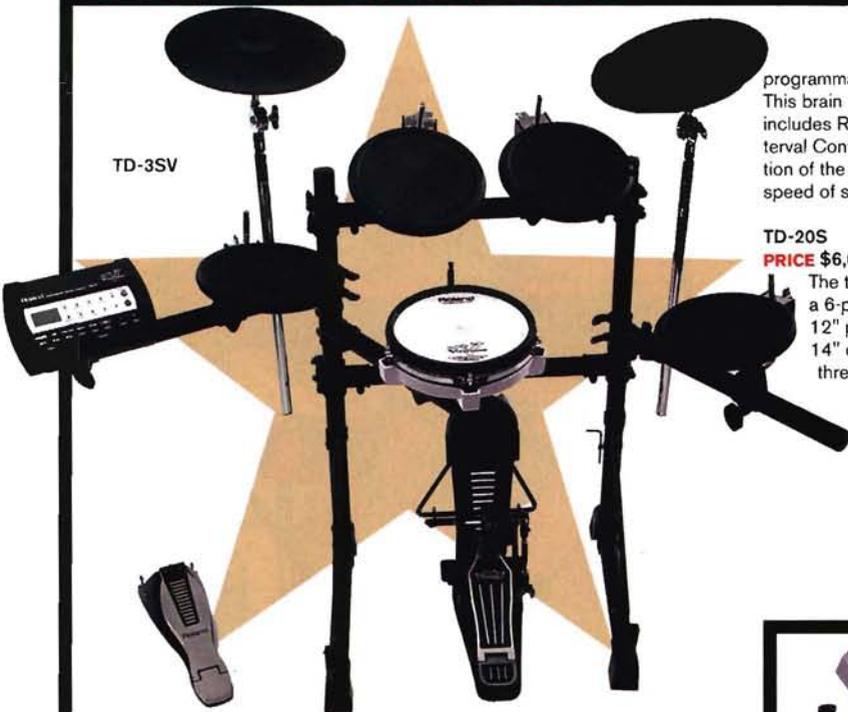
The flagship EX model adds a fourth tom.

## GON BOPS SOLID-STAVE CONSTRUCTION.

It's what makes California Series custom congas and bongos sound so good. The staves are cut from hand-selected quarter-sawn North American Red Oak and steam bent into the legendary Gon Bops shape. Made by hand the traditional way—the way percussion should be.

To check out the full line of California Series congas and bongos or to find your nearest dealer, visit [www.gonbops.com](http://www.gonbops.com).





TD-3SV

## ROLAND

### TD-3S

**PRICE \$1,095**

The TD-3S is Roland's entry-level kit with four PD-8 dual-trigger rubber pads and a KD-8 vertical kick trigger. The snare can read head and rim strokes, and the hi-hat pad reads bow and edge strokes. Cymbals include two CY-8 dual-trigger pads that support chokes for ride and crash. Completing the kit is the FD-8 hi-hat controller, which offers smooth transitions between open and closed sounds.

The TD-3 module comes with 114 drum and percussion sounds in 32 drum-kit combinations. There are also 15 onboard ambience and compression effects to help give your drums a bigger sound. Nine trigger inputs allow for more pads in the future. The TD-3 even includes Roland's Rhythm Coach with rhythm-training exercises.

### TD-3SV

**PRICE \$1,199**

This upgrade is based on the same TD-3 brain but includes a PD-85BK dual-trigger mesh-head snare pad.

### TD-6S

**PRICE \$1,699**

The TD-6S is essentially the same kit as the TD-3SV with the addition of the curved-bar MDS-6SL silver rack and the more-sophisticated TD-6V drum brain.

The TD-6V features 1,024 drum and percussion sounds and 64-voice polyphony. There are also 262 backing instruments, 99 kit memory locations, and 170 play-along songs with 100 user-song locations. There's an

onboard 6-track sequencer with 12,000-note storage for recording and playing your original songs.

### TD-6SX

**PRICE \$2,399**

This kit is based on the same TD-6V brain, but it's Roland's entry-level kit with 100-percent mesh heads. This 5-piece kit features a PD-105BK 10" dual-trigger snare and three PD-85BK 8" tom pads. There's also a cymbal upgrade with the inclusion of the CY-12R/C ride cymbal pad.

### TD-12S

**PRICE \$4,299**

The drum pads on the 12S are the same as those on the 6SX: dual-trigger 10" snare and three 8" toms. However, you can order the 12S in either black or white finishes. The cymbal pads include two of the CY-12R/C units, and the kick trigger is the KD-85. Also upgraded for this kit is the company's VH-11 hi-hat pad that fits on a normal hi-hat stand. The MDS-12BK rack is heavier duty than the one included in the 6SX and includes curved supports, cymbal booms and tilters, and a cable system that fits inside the tubing.

The 12S brain features 560 drum and percussion sounds that can be tweaked to create over 170,000 variations using Roland's Variable Drum Modeling. Using a very slick graphic interface, you can adjust shell depth, head type, tuning, muffling, amount of snare buzz, and many other parameters. It boasts 64-voice polyphony and 50 kits that can be combined into 16 chains. There are plenty of onboard effects

programmable on a per-pad basis. This brain is brush compatible and includes Roland's highly effective Interval Control, which varies the reaction of the sound based on the speed of stroke repetition.

### TD-20S

**PRICE \$6,699**

The top-of-the-line Roland kit is a 6-piece monster with three 12" pads, two 10" pads, two 14" crash cymbals, and a three-zone 15" ride. It also includes the KD-120 kick,

the new VH-12 hi-hat with top and bottom cymbals, and the MDS-20 stand.

The TD-20 brain also has 560 sounds but with more editing options – over a million possible variations. If you need more inputs, the TD-20 has 15 for additional expandability. If you need lots of outputs, the TD-20 has ten as well as a S/PDIF digital out. There's also an included CompactFlash slot for storage and Roland's V-LINK technology for working with images and video.



DTXPLOLER

## YAMAHA

### DTXPLOLER

**PRICE \$1,059**

The Xplorer is designed as a 5-piece kit with a sixth pad used as a hi-hat surface. There are also two cymbal pads, a hi-hat controller pedal, the FP-6110 bass drum pedal, hollow aluminum tubular rack stand, the Xplorer brain, and all necessary coded cables to hook it all together. The drum pads are all 8.5" single-zone pads, and the cymbals are pie-shaped single-zone pads. The hi-hat controller pedal tracks full open, full closed, foot closed notes, and foot splashes.

Even though the pads on the Xplorer are mono, the brain's eight trigger inputs will accept and respond to dual-zone stereo pads if you upgrade in the future. It offers up 192 16-bit drum and percussion sounds, along with an additional 22 general MIDI voices, that can be combined into 32 factory and 10 user-programmable kits with 32-voice polyphony. The brain comes with 22 preset songs and includes basic on-board effects. In addition to

the Groove Check feature, the Xplorer has Rhythm Gate that mutes the sound if you don't play in time with the click.

#### DTXPRESS III

**PRICE \$1,295**

The Xpress III is also a 5-piece kit, but with three significant upgrades. The snare pad is the TP65S three-zone pad capable of reading triggers from the head, the rim, and cross-stick playing. The kit also includes the PCY65S dual-zone cymbal pad to be used as a ride cymbal and a more stable and flexible rack.

With this brain, you've got 990 drum sounds and a full complement of 128 general MIDI sounds to choose from. The machine comes with 48 pre-programmed kits, and you can save your own creations to 32 different user locations. There are 95 factory play-along songs and you can load your own songs into 32 user locations. Another significant addition is the inclusion of a two-track sequencer and the ability to offload memory to a computer.

#### DTXPRESS III SPECIAL

**PRICE \$1,995**

This upgrade gets you the RH130HH hi-hat system mounted on a real hi-hat stand. On the Special version, you'll find cymbals that are round rather than wedge-shaped. The PCY150S is a 15" three-zone ride cymbal pad that will read strokes on the bell, the bow, and the edge. The PCY130S is a 13" stereo crash pad, and the PCY130 is an additional single-zone cymbal pad. The Special also has a newly designed curved rack.

#### DTXTREME IIS

**PRICE \$3,195**

Along with the 12" three-zone snare pad, each of the four 10" tom is also a three-zone pad. Each pad also has a special onboard knob for adjusting the sounds in real time. The cymbal pads are the same as those included in the Xpress III Special: the RH130HH hi-hat, a three-zone ride, a two-zone crash, and a mono crash. The rack is, of course, much larger to accommodate the additional pads and cymbals.

The Xtreme IIS includes a selection of drum voices from the high-end MOTIF synth. There are 2,177 drum sounds with plenty of onboard effects, 128 general MIDI voices, and 64-note polyphony. If you need a large number of available kits, you'll find 90 preset kits from the factory and the ability to store 40 more user kits. There are 164 preset songs and 32 user songs for plenty of play-along practice. One of the unique features of the Xtreme is the ability to store and reload up to 8MB of voices, kits, and songs via a SmartMedia card. The unit is also capable of creating samples with up to 94 seconds of mono-phonetic sampling time using a 44.1kHz sample rate. If you don't want to roll your own, you can load AIFF or WAV files from another source. ■



**FORK'S**  
DRUM CLOSET

Call 1(800)55-FORKS  
[www.forksdrumcloset.com](http://www.forksdrumcloset.com)

Fax 615.269.0245 • 2701 12th Ave. South • Nashville, TN 37204

Visit TigerBill's DrumBeat  
for Free Access to:



**Free Online Drum Lessons:**  
Learn Tiger Bill's Tension Free  
Technique!

**Free Percussion Forums:**  
Most educational on the Web!

**Famous Drummer Videos:**  
Free clips of the world's best!

**Lowest Priced Drum Shop:**  
Discounts on everything!

**Win Valuable Drum Stuff:**  
Many monthly giveaways!

**Complete Product Reviews:**  
No fluff, just the facts!

Take your Drumming to the  
next level with the largest &  
most complete Drum Resource

[www.tigerbill.com](http://www.tigerbill.com)  
908-638-5545

**YOU DON'T  
HAVE TO MOVE  
TO L.A.**

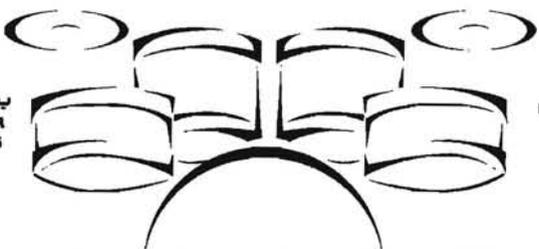
**Learn To Play Drums Like A  
Pro At The Gelb Music  
Teaching Institute**

G.M.T.I.'s head drum instructor, MIKE CUROTTO, has 43 years of teaching experience in the Bay Area, and 47 years of experience playing and recording with various rock, jazz, funk, fusion, Latin, top 40, and casual bands in the S.F. Bay Area. Plus, Gelb's clinicians have included TONY WILLIAMS, MATT SORUM, STEVE SMITH, WILL KENNEDY, ROY BURNS, STEVE GADD, DAVE WECKL, DENNIS CHAMBERS, PETER ERSKINE, GREGG BISSONETTE, BILL COBHAM, TERRY BOZZIO AND TOM BRECHTLEIN.

**GELB MUSIC**  
TEACHING INSTITUTE

2728 Broadway, Redwood City, CA  
(850) 385-0875

Mike's Studio-Direct Line:  
(850) 595-2022



SERVING  
ORANGE COUNTY  
DRUMMERS FOR  
OVER 40 YEARS

NOW SERVING  
THE WORLD

**WEST COAST DRUM CENTER**

3686 S. BRISTOL ST.  
SANTA ANA, CA 92704  
CALL TOLL FREE 1.877.WCDRUMS  
HTTP://WWW.WESTCOASTDRUMCENTER.COM