

R.E.T.

NS2 Pro Electronic Drum Set

ACOUSTIC/ELECTRIC COLLISION

BY **NORMAN WEINBERG**

On the surface, it might seem as if the market for electronic drum sets is all but locked up by one or two big, international corporations. The reality is, potential purchasers of this endlessly entertaining instrument have more options today than ever before. In the June 2006 issue of *DRUM!*, we pointed out in the "Electronic Drum-Set Buying Guide" that there are almost 40 different sets available on the market. And that number continues to grow as new companies look to break onto the scene.

One of the newer additions in the field of electronic drums is R.E.T. (Rhythm Electronic Technology) Percussion, a company that attempts to

blend the look and feel of acoustic drums with the sonic flexibility of electronics. The R.E.T. aesthetic combines real acoustic heads, real hardware, and real shells with a fully functional electronic brain (that you have to buy separately). The result is something fresh and different that offers a much-needed bridge between the realms of acoustic and electronic drumming.

OUT OF THE BOX

The NS2 Pro kit consists of four Dual Trigger drums (one snare and three toms) and one Single Trigger bass drum, as well as one pair of 12" Dual Zone hi-hats, one 13" Dual Zone crash cymbal, and one 16" Dual Zone ride cymbal. Each of the drums is constructed from the same 5" x 13", 8-ply Keller maple

shells and features a triple-flanged hoop and six bowtie, single-tension casings. The snare is designed to sit in a regular snare basket, while the toms and the bass drum have a post-style mounting bracket attached to the shell for mounting on the rack. The bass drum also has a

heavy-duty support plate mounted to the bottom of the drum that serves as a riser and a host for the pedal. Each drum is supplied with an Evans Genera 2 coated head.

Again, the NS2 Pro does not come with an electronic drum brain. In order to make any sounds, you'll need to purchase one separately. Since the snare, toms, and cymbals are all Dual Trigger, you should consider purchasing a brain that reads and responds to Dual Trigger pads to be sure and get the most out of this kit. Of course, you'll need to adjust the brain to fit both your playing style and the response of the pads. But with a little tweaking, the NS2 Pro drums and cymbals should respond well to any brand and model drum brain or trigger-to-MIDI interface.

THE DRUMS

Inside each shell is a metal bridge that spans between two opposing lugs. By connecting the bridge to the lugs, R.E.T. has eliminated the need to drill additional holes in the shell. The bridge supports a 9" circular sandwich of metal and foam that houses the piezo transducer, while also serving to muffle the acoustic response of the plastic head. R.E.T. claims that the foam cuts stick noise level by 60dB, but you can easily adjust the entire bridge mechanism up or down by nearly an inch in order to increase or decrease the pressure of the disk against the head, thereby altering the muffling effect.

The addition of Neutrik cable jacks is an especially nice touch. These jacks have a locking mechanism that prevents the cable from being accidentally unplugged. It's a smart, sorely needed addition. The lugs, mounting hardware, and Neutrik connector are all mounted to the outside of the shell with rubber gaskets to help prevent rattling.

On the Dual Trigger drums, the rim trigger is mounted on the side of the shell. It consists of a 1" piezo transducer sandwiched between two rubber blocks inside a metal framework. Both the head trigger and the rim trigger are connected to the stereo Neutrik jack with sturdy cables and solid solder

DETAILS

MODEL NS2 Pro

SHELLS 5", 8-ply Keller maple

AVAILABLE FINISHES Custom Cherry, Natural Maple, Custom Honey, Ocean Blue, Classic Walnut, Mirror Black, and Custom.

FEATURES Cables, locking mechanism on the Neutrik cable jacks, velcro ties, memory locks, multiple drum module compatibility.

PRICE \$3,195

CONTACT R.E.T. Percussion, Inc., 166 S. Linden Ave., Decatur, IL 62522. 217-620-8410. Dealer Inquiries: 406-837-2750 retpercussion.com

joints. The quality of construction is such that I can't imagine what kind of abuse these cables and joints would need to suffer to show any real damage.

CYMBALS

The cymbals on the NS2 Pro are made by Smartrigger and are all crafted with a metal playing surface that has a clear, 1/16" plastic layer on the bottom. The plastic dampens the acoustic aspect of the metal, while still allowing the cymbal to feel remarkably natural in terms of feel and response. The crash cymbal features a choke area of 180 degrees, while the ride cymbal senses strokes on the bell and on the bow of the cymbal, and the hi-hats sense strokes on both the bow and the edge.

HARDWARE

The Ultimate Support chrome rack that anchors the pieces of the kit is solid and stable with two curved front arms. The top arm holds the mounted toms while the lower arm holds the bass drum. In addition, there are three extension arms that hold the floor tom, the hi-hat cymbals, and the sound module of

your choice, and two cymbal booms, which extend up from vertical support bars. While the booms may not seem to provide the highest degree of flexibility, I had no problem putting the cymbals exactly where I wanted them. The NS2 Pro also comes with a Gibraltar double-braced snare drum stand and all the cables you'll need to connect the pads to a brain. In fact, once you've got your drum brain, all you'll need to start making noise are a bass drum pedal and a hi-hat controller.

PUTTING THE NS2 PRO THROUGH ITS PACES

For this review, I used the NS2 Pro pads with a DrumKAT to trigger sounds from my computer system, the Alesis DM5 brain, and a Yamaha brain. With all three machines, the kit responded well to my touch, though I did find I needed to perform a little head tuning first. The head tension won't affect the sound coming out of the brain, but it will affect the way the drums react to your playing. But once you get all of your settings dialed in, you won't have to go through the process again.

VERDICT

For those seeking the expanded options and sound control of an electronic kit, but unwilling to sacrifice the visual appeal of a traditional one, the NS2 Pro comes highly recommended. One word of caution to those planning on taking this bad boy on the road: with bearing edges on the open side of the drum, you'll need to be extra careful to avoid nicks and dings. Otherwise, it's difficult to find anything that would significantly improve these instruments in terms of their design and construction. As for feel, which is no small consideration when purchasing an electronic kit, this one is closer to an acoustic drum feel than any other electronic kit I've played. But in the end, you definitely need to head down to your local drum shop and try these out for yourself.

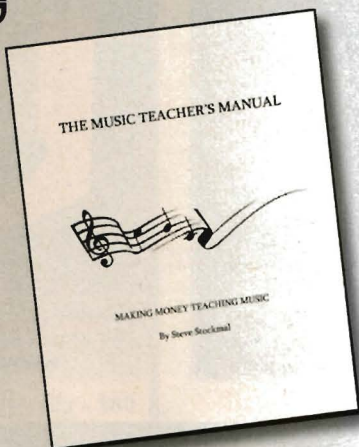
One point of concern that popped up was with volume. While the acoustic volume of the NS2 Pro is certainly well below that of an acoustic kit, it's not nearly as quiet as a mesh-head or rubber-pad electronic kit, at least none that I've played. The folks at R.E.T. say that the kit is compatible with mesh heads, but that would defeat the "real head feel," which is a significant selling point of this setup. Also, since the rims don't have any type of rubber covering, rimshots increase the acoustic sound of the kit even more. If you're playing in a venue where the amplification is relatively strong, you're audience won't

notice these sounds. If, on the other hand, you're buying an electronic kit to practice at home while the rest of the family is sleeping, you might want to look elsewhere.

The feel of this kit is not unlike the feel of a Remo practice pad. With the heads muted by large foam disks, they can't react in quite the same way as real, acoustic drums. There's a little less give to the head and a little less rebound of the stick. However, I really didn't find this to be too much of a problem. Though it took a little time to adjust to the feel and response of these drums, once the adjustment was made, I could relax and play quite naturally. ■

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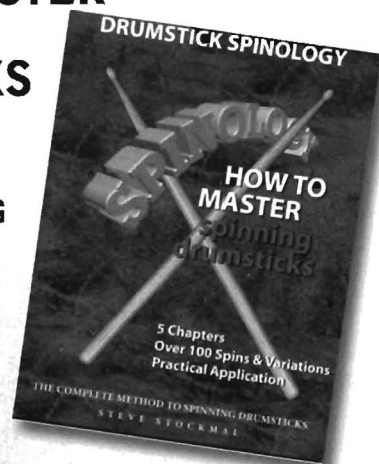
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