

**PLUG  
& PLAY  
RIGHT  
AWAY**

# Roland

## TD-25K Kit

By Norman Weinberg

**R**oland's electronic kits have been dropping jaws since 1984, when the company launched the DDR-30. That was 32 years ago, folks, and yet here we are again, putting the company's latest model under the microscope, a testimony to Roland's enduring presence in the market. In this case, we're looking at the new TD-25K kit, which seems to be targeted to players interested in a mesh-headed kit that feels natural, plays well, and sounds great, and who don't require the full platter of features packed into the company's flagship TD-30.

### OUT OF THE BOX

TD-25K playing surfaces include one 10" snare pad (PDX-100), two 6" tom pads (PDX-6), one 8" tom pad (PDX-8), one 13" ride cymbal pad (CY-13R), one 12" crash cymbal pad (CY-12C), one 11" hi-hat pad (VH-11), and a KD-9 kick pad. We also received the TD-25 brain as well as the stand and all required cables.

The stand is designed to make setup quick and easy. Simply fold out the right and left sides, tighten the screws, insert two cymbal stands into their clamps, and it's ready for the brain and pads. After that, you need to add only your own hi-hat pedal, kick pedal, and throne, and you're off to the races.

I found the TD-25K stand to be very solid and secure, both on hard and carpeted floors. Its metal pipes were attached using clamps made of a very high quality plastic, so that they don't feel like they're about to crack or slip as you tighten them down. It took some time to get everything positioned, but it worked like a charm once it was locked in.

The pads are pretty small, which could be an issue for some drummers. I try to maintain a focused target spot when I play, so I didn't have any trouble with the small surfaces. If you've played on mesh-headed pads before, you won't find any surprises with the feel and touch of this kit. Most mesh heads feel pretty spongy right out of the box, but within a few minutes I was able to tension the TD-25K heads to better simulate my own acoustic drum's response. I loved the feel of the kick pad without having to make any adjustments.

Tom and snare pads respond to both head strokes and rim hits, but you can't assign a different sound to each with the TD-25K brain. When changing tom sounds in a factory kit, calling up a new tom sound will automatically load its predetermined rim sound. If you call up a new ride cymbal, you'll also call up all of its components:

bell, bow, and edge. Yes, this makes the whole assignment process much easier to deal with, but removes some of the potential experimentation electronic kits can offer.

The snare pad responds to positional sensing, but I had a difficult time determining exactly what was happening to the sound when moving from one position to another. Of course, the dynamic changed, but the characteristic timbre differences between "edge" verses "center" weren't very pronounced. However, when I had an instrument that supports brushes loaded on to the snare pad, the pad tracked that feature well.

I enjoy playing Roland's cymbal pads. Their physical movement is similar to an acoustic cymbal, and I like the feel of the stroke through the stick. The crash is pretty flexible, with bow and edge notes firing different samples. The choking feature works exactly as you would expect, and the ride cymbal responds well to bell strokes. I didn't experience any cross-talk or false triggering problems between the head and the rim on any of the drum pads, or on the cymbals, even while playing at my strongest dynamics.

The hi-hat system is capable of creating changes in duration based on the pressure applied to

the hi-hat controller, and foot splash and foot closed sounds are included (splashes sound especially natural). The hi-hat pad responds to both normal playing position and playing at the edge. With all its variety, this hi-hat system is about as good as you can expect on an electronic kit.

### INSIDE THE BRAIN

There are 36 locations with 18 different factory kits arranged into three variations in six categories of musical styles: Standard, Rock, Metal, Jazz, Funk, and Electro. Selecting kits couldn't be easier: Just rotate the large selection knob to the desired style, and push the knob to select the appropriate kit. While 18 kits might not sound like a huge number by today's standards, all are completely usable and I didn't hear any "filler."

The front panel of the TD-25 is laid out into nine different sections related to their functions. A group of four knobs is used to access the instrument assignment, the tuning amount, the muffling, and the level of each pad. It's very easy to select a different instrument: Simply strike the pad you want to change and rotate the knob to the desired sound. There's even a feature to change the sound of all three toms at once.



12" CY-12C V-Cymbal Crash features a natural swinging motion, edge/bow sensors, and choke control.

13" CY-13R V-Cymbal Ride features a natural swinging motion and edge/bow/bell triggering.

11" VH-11 V-Hi-Hat mounts on a standard acoustic hi-hat pedal.

6" mesh-head PDX-6 Tom V-Pad

8" mesh-head PDX-8 Tom V-Pad

TD-25 sound module with SuperNATURAL sound engine

10" mesh-head PDX-100 Snare V-Pad includes positional sensing and rimshot/rim-click playing.

MDS-9V Drum Stand

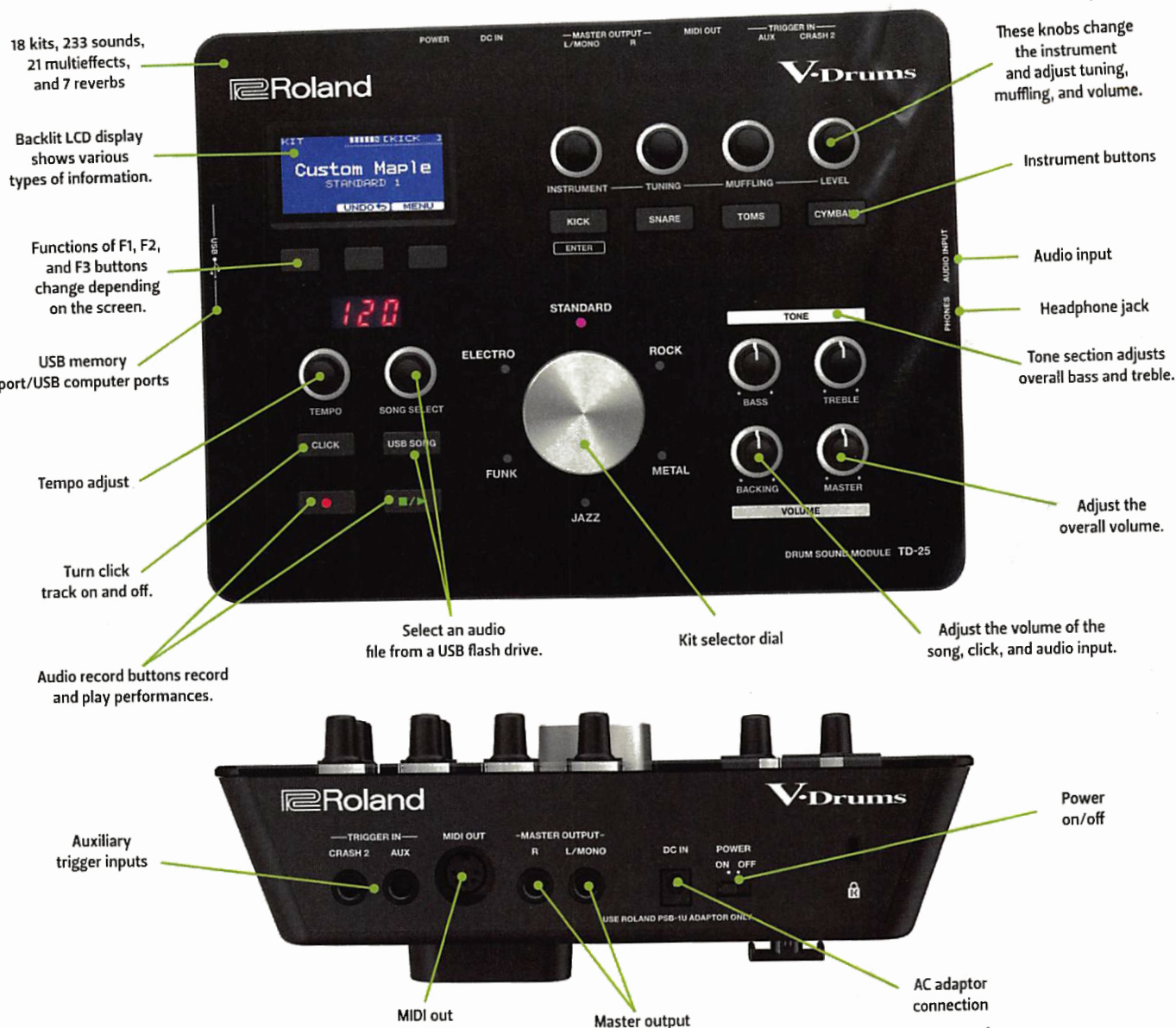
KD-9 Kick Pad with cloth head

MSRP \$2,778 (hi-hat and bass drum pedals not included)



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## SOUNDS

In all, the TD-25K offers a good variety of sounds, with 20 different kits, 19 snares, 11 cross-sticks, 57 toms, 18 hi-hats, 29 crash cymbals, 21 rides, 7 splashes, 7 Chinas, 4 cymbal stacks, 28 percussion sounds, and 12 "other" sounds, bringing the grand total to 233 different voices. Many brains on the market have double or even triple the number of individual sounds, but I question how many players actually use of all the special effects and "oddball" sounds that are often included. I think the TD-25 has all the sounds you need for most musical applications. But if you need

more, plugging the USB cable directly from the brain into your laptop provides access to the entire sonic universe. And you can set unique MIDI note numbers for heads and rims as well as all the different positions of the cymbals.

The sounds are very good. Cymbals decay naturally, toms have plenty of body, snares crack, and the bass drums are awesome. One potential limitation is that some sounds can be assigned to only certain types of pads. For example, you can't assign a cymbal sound to your kick pad, or a snare sound to one of the tom pads. For many, this won't be a drawback at all, but it could

be a consideration for players who want to push the boundaries of sound and instrument assignment. The cymbal pads offer the most flexible sound assignment, with the kick drum and the tom pads offering the fewest choices.

You can adjust a sound's tuning over a four-octave range, add muffling (two types of tape and two types of felt), and set each pad's level. Individual volume controls are also available for the hi-hat pedal and the cross-stick. From the front face, you can adjust the main output volume and tone by way of a treble and bass control. Diving further into the brain's programmable parameters, you

can also set the center frequency for these adjustments.

## DIAL IT IN

Reverb choices include Booth, Studio 1, Studio 2, Stage, Arena, Gate, and Long Reverb. These seven controls affect all the sounds in an entire kit, but each kit also has its own settings, and the amount of reverb can be dialed in from 0-127.

The TD-25K also includes a number of multieffects, such as delay, tape echo, phaser, flanger, chorus, filters, and ring modulators. Each type of multieffect offers different parameters that can be adjusted to individualize your sound. You can tweak sounds even



further by adjusting the routing and the level of the effect to include both the dry and effected sound together or individually.

While everything on the TD-25 may feel and respond perfectly right out of the box, you can improve your playing experience by making a few modifications. This brain contains all of the tweaks needed to customize the kit to better fit your playing style. You likely won't need to change the type of pad connected to a particular input, but this might be important if you ever decide to change out one of your pads to something else, or add another crash pad. You can adjust each pad's sensitivity, threshold, rim gain, velocity curve, head/rim adjustment, cross-stick trigger, retrigger cancel, scan time, mask time, position detection, external noise cancellation, and cross-talk cancellation. You might not ever need these features, but it's nice to know they're available, just in case.

## EDUCATIONAL

There aren't many educational tools on the TD-25K, but you do get the most important one: the ability to record yourself, along with the signal from the audio input jack or metronome. Then you can listen to your performances to analyze your strengths and weaknesses, and save the results out to a USB memory stick. You can record up to approximately three minutes without a USB stick inserted into the brain, and as much as 30 minutes with it. There's also a USB computer port to connect the brain to a desktop or laptop, so you can record either the MIDI information or audio signal into your DAW.

The brain includes a few "fun and games" features, with three different coach-mode settings (with version 1.10): Time Check, Quiet Count, and Warm Ups. Time Check compares the strokes of your kick and snare to the metronome and provides a real-time display of your timing accuracy. Quiet Count drops out the sound of the


metronome, requiring you to keep steady time without the click. Using this feature, you can adjust the number of measures that the click will be quiet. In Warm Up mode, you can specify the style of rhythm you'll play, the change in metronome speed (getting faster and slowing down), and how long you want the warmup to last. I found these little games to be fun and useful at the same time.

## WE HAVE ISSUES

Several snare sounds seem to have a "round robin" effect. In other words, there are two different, yet similar, sounds that alternate in a seemingly random pattern. I found the difference between the two sounds a little too dissimilar for my ear. And rather than being truly random, the "random" pattern was a 16-note pattern that repeated. This might not be a problem for most applications and many players, and could even go entirely undetected when playing the

full kit. But it was audible to me while playing a series of repeated eighths or sixteenths on the snare drum.

## VERDICT

With the introduction of the TD-25K, Roland has created an electronic kit for the drummer who isn't particularly interested in becoming a MIDI guru. It's easy to get up and running right away. Interfaces are simple and intuitive. And the chance of getting lost in programming hell is minimal. The trade-off, of course, is that the kit has fewer bells and whistles. So the TD-25K may not be the first choice of hardcore electronic drummers. But it might be the ticket for an acoustic drummer who just wants to practice at home or play local gigs on an e-kit with great sounds. While the \$2K street price might seem a bit steep with that in mind, the Roland brand comes with an assurance of quality, which has a lot of value. 

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