

Brady Drums Be-Bop Kit

Mighty Mite

HITS

gorgeous hand-made
Australian hardwood shells

snare is versatile

bass drum is a little cannon

hardware is worth its extra weight

MISSSES

drums are pricey

12" rack tom seems too large for
compact "jazz" configuration

by **Robin Tolleson**

You know how when you pick up a piece of electronic gear, and it's really heavy and just feels solid...somehow you feel like you're getting your money's worth? That's kind of what Brady Drums are like. Even the small drums that comprise their Be-Bop kit take a little muscle to pack around. But to the discriminating player, the exotic look and top-end tone of the drums could overshadow the weight—and the weighty price tag.

The Brady Drum Company, located in Armadale in Western Australia, makes its own ply, solid wood, and block shells. For their ply drums, Brady uses select grades of West Australian hardwoods such as jarrah and marri. On their block-shell snares they also use sheoak, wandoo, gimlet, and goldfields blackbutt, because of different musical properties in the wood. Solid wood snares made of jarrah or wandoo are available by special order only.

Hard Boppin'

The Be-Bop kit we were sent for review is a hand-made marri ply set, with a beautiful gloss finish. These drums are a sight, with the unusual grain patterns in the wood—honey-colored, with splashes of gray and black—showcased in protective lacquer. Marri is found in the wild forests of southwest Australia, and is extremely hard and durable. Brady uses a dry-mold system, and presses the plies in a straight-grain method (with all the grain running in the same horizontal direction around the drumshell) rather than cross-laminating the plies. Brady claims that this method gives the drums a "solid wood sound." I can't argue with that claim.





5 1/2 x 14 marri ply snare drum

The drums aren't heavy because of their shells. The rack tom, for instance, has eight thin plies. The weight comes from the 2.3-mm triple-flanged steel hoops, and from the on-shell hardware. According to the company, "The unique sound qualities of our drums is produced best with the use of steel hoops." Once again, I can't argue the point, because the combination works.

Brady's streamlined, efficient lug casings are connected on this kit by steel tubes running the length of the shell, contributing to a solid feel and sound. They also give the kit a classy, retro look. A rubber washer separates the shell from each piece of hardware that comes in contact with it.

Sonic Boom

The 14x18 bass drum is powerful yet tuneful, producing a warm, open sound. This drum has plenty of punch, and can be played with jazz, rock, or funk in mind. The bass drum legs are thick and strong. Hand-made bass drums up to 20" in depth are also available.

The 14x14 floor tom had the heart and soul of a much bigger drum. It was capable of booming out some serious low end, though it could also be played softly. The tone was clean and warm, never too high or boingy.

Since our review kit was called a Be-Bop model, and considering the small size of the other drums, I found myself wishing that the rack tom was an 11" or even a 10" rather than the 8x12 that was sent. It's not that the 12" tom sounded bad. On the contrary, it sounded very good—clear and true. But to my ear, the fundamental tone of the rack tom on this particular kit could stand to be a little higher than this one, relative to the other drums. That would be easy enough to achieve, since Brady offers custom tom sizes in almost any diameter, and in any depth up to the same dimension as the diameter.

Our review kit technically does not include a snare drum. Snares are sold separately. The snare that we tested featured a 5 1/2 x 14 marri ply shell. It sounded very crisp and articulate, yet rimshots were full and warm. This is a versatile drum—sensitive enough to work in a demanding orchestral section, and earthy enough for funk or jazz playing.

Drum Hardware

Brady doesn't sell stands, but the hardware on their drums is top-notch. The snare drum features a clear version of the Nickel Drumworks strainer, which I find to be a model of simplicity and strength. The rack toms feature an isolation mounting system and memory locks. The floor tom legs come with thick rubber tips for a firm grip to the ground. The leg mounts on the drum are heavyweight quality, and they feature finger grips that are easy to tighten and loosen—very drummer-friendly.

Conclusion

The adage that "you get what you pay for" generally proves true. Well, with a Brady kit you're paying for hand-made quality, rare materials, distinctive appearance, excellent design, and terrific sound. You're also paying for import fees from halfway around the world. It all adds up, I admit. But how much is uniqueness worth?

THE NUMBERS

Marri Ply Be-Bop Kit	\$4,900
Includes 8x12 and 14x14 toms with mounting hardware and legs, and a 14x18 bass drum with spurs. Finished in clear gloss. Available in satin finish at \$4,150.	
Marri Ply 5 1/2 x 14 Snare Drum, with gloss finish	\$1,140
Available in satin finish at \$990.	
(011) 61-8-9497 2212, www.bradydrums.com.au.	

