

Today's Drum Kits - How Important Is The Drum Brand

Modern Technology Today's drum manufacturers have had the tremendous benefit of learning from the past mistakes and successes of others, as well as, the advancement of so many technological developments. Modern methods have permitted improvement in the quality of materials, glues, and even quality control tests. The ability to make great drums has never been better! Today's big name drum makers all make some really great products. Some also make some lower price-point products, and student-line or beginner-level products, where certain material cost savings measures and production methods facilitate cheaper price tags. However, the top line drums, usually have more meticulous craftsmanship, closer specification tolerances, and better materials than the lower lines. There are also some very fine custom drum makers out there today that make very high quality products based upon the specifications and preferences of the individual buyers. Their pains taking attention to fine details and finishing are evidenced in their work. I have seen and heard some incredible drums from these shops. I have been fortunate to be in performing situations where I have been able to play lots of different drum kits from lots of different manufacturers. So I can say that in my opinion, just like cars there are some differences.

Features Now most companies have unique design features which may be the very reason you would want to buy their products over some other company's. For example, Pearl (Reference Series) has been making drums with different woods and different ply construction for each drum size. DW has "Timbre Matching" and "Vertical Grain" designs which appeals to many buyers. Other companies use various woods, lug designs, metals, unique sizes, etc. and all of this does affect the overall sound characteristics. There are more choices than ever and it can be confusing to someone ready to buy their dream kit. So how do you choose I believe that like buying an automobile, the drum kit for you should fit your needs and your playing style and your desired image. It should also give you an absolute feeling of pride and satisfaction when you sit down to play. In addition to sizes and configurations, you will need to research the design differences and decide what best suits your own special performance requirements. For example, do you want warm mellow tone Do you want tons of bottom end Do you want lots of projection, or more control Do you want lots of sustain or more moderate sustain Some drums today are designed to give you those different sound characteristics. Choices, choices, and more choices. Which manufacturer has the counter hoops that feel and sound best to you Which drums are easiest to tune Which lug design holds the tunings best What neat features on this particular brand absolutely "does it" for you The answer to these questions would affect your choices in sizes, and brands.

Looks Now cosmetics are also a consideration. Maybe cosmetics have little or nothing to do with the sound or feel of the drums, but they do have a lot to do with how you feel when you look at your drum kit. Custom finishes, gold hardware, tube lugs, whatever these are all very personal choices, but it can also add a lot to the final cost. Maybe, to you, the additional cost is worth it. Maybe you also want to have the satisfaction of a very different look from all of the other drum kits.

Neil's Sound Test I remember that Neil Peart went on a quest for his ideal drum kit several years ago. He decided that he would use the 9" x 13" rack tom as his constant factor in the initial testing for the sound characteristics of drums from all of the drum companies. I don't know if I would agree that particular drum size is the one for you or me to use as a test drum, but, Neil tried lots of 9" x 13" toms, tunings and head combinations etc., until he finally decided which company made the drum that he felt sounded "best". After that he tried their other drums etc. and finally made his choices. This may provide you an idea or some orderly way to weed through some of the endless flavors a little quicker, or maybe not! Either way, I just thought I would share that story with you. The "best drums" is a highly subjective term. By now, you are aware of my opinion that there are plenty of well-made, top quality, great sounding drums available today. Only you can weed out the ones you don't like, and finally get down to a short list of best possible choices for you.

Warranties Some manufacturers have better warranties, and some have better reputations for quick shipment of repair parts. These "after sales" factors that might affect your final choice.

Endorsements I believe some major dude drummers endorse certain brands because they really feel that particular brand is "the one". However, other drummers might endorse a brand, not only because they make good products, but also because they get a lot of free stuff and a lot of name recognition. I know the big companies will hate me for saying this but does it really matter to you that (fill in the name) plays (fill in the brand) drums The big drum companies think it does and they spend a lot of money, to make sure you will think the same. For example, how many different brands has Billy Cobham gone through Or Terry or Vinnie or Bobby Get the point So does it matter what brand your favorite drummer playing this year Seriously, you have a brain and you have ears and you know what sounds "good" to you, and also know what sounds great to you. Isn't that a better guide line than slick advertising

Final Analysis If it sounds like I'm saying that it doesn't matter what brand then you're wrong. It does. But it only matters what brand absolutely rocks your world, not mine. It's what absolutely feels best to you and inspires you to sit and play and play and play. Those are the drums that really "do it" for you. It may be one of the few times in your life where it really and truly is - all about you! Next time we'll talk about hardware and cases. Cheers! Ken Sanders

About the Author

With more than 40 years of professional stage experience Ken has played on many drum sets from vertically all drum brands starting from [Ludwig Drums](#) and [Rogers Drums](#) all the way to today's Dw Drums. Ken Sanders is an active [Drum Forum](#) member at Drum Solo Artist where he is answering drum related questions, and helping drummers with tips and advices.