

Taye StudioMaple And RockPro Drumkits

An Impressive New Kid On The Block

HITS

excellent workmanship on both series

StudioMaples offer pro-quality
acoustic performance

outstanding value for the price

MISSES

RockPro bass drum beater
should be upgraded

by Mark Parsons

Taye drums (pronounced “tie”) may *seem* like yet another newcomer to the ranks of drum manufacturers. But the fact is that the company has been building drums imported under the brand names of several major manufacturers for over twenty-five years. Now, under the guidance of Canadian drum guru Ray Ayotte, they’re selling drumkits under their own name.

Taye currently offers five series of kits: StudioMaple (maple shells, lacquer finish, slide-track tom mount), TourPro (basswood shells, lacquer finish, slide-track tom mount), ProX (basswood shells, lacquer finish, regular tom mount), RockPro (hardwood shells, covered finish, regular tom mount), and Spotlight (hardwood shells, covered finish, lightweight tom mount). All but the Spotlight series feature suspended rack toms. A dizzying array of package configurations is available in each of these series, and the drums are also all available individually. Selection is the watchword at Taye.

We were sent two kits for review: a five-piece StudioMaple in a natural lacquer finish, and a six-piece RockPro with a metallic-silver covered finish. Let’s take a look at each one individually.



StudioMaple Kit



StudioMaple Drums

The all-maple shells of the StudioMaple series are manufactured in-house by Taye. Toms up to 13" are 6-ply, larger toms and kicks are 7-ply, and snares are 10-ply. All of the drums are made without reinforcing rings.

Fit and finish were very good across the board. The kit's natural maple glossy polyurethane finish was very nicely done. Bearing edges were likewise—very smooth and clean.

With the exception of the snare drum (which used ten double-ended lugs), all of the drums used the same lugs, including the kick. Taye's lug is a small, low-mass design attached to the shells with isolation gaskets. The rack toms were suspended on RIMS-type mounts.

To my surprise, the drumheads were also made in-house by Taye. Top heads on the toms and the snare were single-ply white-coated models. The bottom tom heads were fairly thin (8 mil) clear models, and the snare had a clear snare-side head. The bass drum batter was a clear head with an integral muffling ring. The smooth white front head was unported (no hole), and also had a muffling ring.

The Hardware

Ray and the boys have obviously been hard at work here, because instead of the expected generic stands and pedals, the Taye hardware shows some serious innovation. For example, the "slide track" tom mount permits approximately 6" of smooth forward/backward travel, resulting in a kick-mounted double tom holder that allows almost infinite position adjustability. An added bonus is the built-in cymbal boom mount.

The large-diameter hi-hat stand features pivoting legs, a twist-ring tension adjustment, a very clever quick-release

clutch, and smooth action. The bass drum pedal also features a sturdy and smooth design, incorporating a double-chain drive and a nifty beater with an adjustable angle of attack.

The rest of the stands were of the same ilk: large, sturdy, double-braced models that functioned smoothly and precisely. The only downside is weight: All of this big, gleaming, chrome-plated tubing is not exactly made of helium. However, when used as the name implies (in the studio), this stable hardware—with almost no attendant mechanical noises—will be a boon.

In Use

Hmmm...let's see. Thin, all-maple shells. Precision edges. Suspension mounts. Quality heads. The StudioMaples certainly have it all...on paper. But does the "theoretical" translate to "reality"? In this case, *yes*.

The short story is that the StudioMaples are a great-sounding kit. I was very impressed by the kick, right out of the box. The tone was deep and resonant, with the damped heads supplying just the right amount of control. You may want to tighten things up a bit for certain types of recording, but I really liked this drum wide open. The toms, likewise, had lots of round sustain, which was complemented by the good articulation of the coated single-ply heads.

The snare had an excellent woody tone, with good sensitivity and good projection. Rimshots might have gained some horsepower were the drum equipped with die-cast hoops. But they were certainly strong enough, and die-cast hoops might have reduced one of this drum's strong points: its versatility. This snare had a very wide tuning range, sounding good wherever I placed it on the tonal scale. (It particularly excelled

at a very useful middle-of-the-road tuning.)

The side-drop throw-off proved smooth and functional in use, making it easy to adjust the snare tension with the snares engaged. All told, this was a very musical and universal drum that would work in a wide variety of settings.

Conclusion

There are a lot of nice drums being made these days. So how does a new company compete? In Taye's case, look no further than their motto: "Better drums...for less money." Such slogans are usually just marketing hype, but in this instance I'd have to say that it rings true. The Taye StudioMaples are pro-quality drums that perform as well as anything you're liable to come across. But the price....

During the review period a drummer friend of mine played the kit, and expressed his admiration. Naturally, he asked me what it cost. I hadn't read the paperwork yet, but I'm pretty familiar with the market, so I took an educated guess and said, "Probably retails for about \$2,500." We both thought that was a pretty good deal. After I'd read the paperwork a few hours later, I called him back. "Try \$1,995." We both agreed that that was an *amazing* deal.

If you're on the lookout for a pro maple kit with all the trimmings, but you're a little short on the long green, give the StudioMaples an audition. I can confidently predict that you won't be disappointed.

RockPro

This is Taye's "value-priced" line, one step up from their entry-level/student series. Even so, there's an obvious family resemblance to the StudioMaples. The kits share the same lugs, suspension mounts, snare and tom hoops, and snare throw-off. (This uniformity of fittings and appointments is one thing that helps keep costs down for Taye. They don't have to pay for different tooling to make different fittings for each drumkit series. Logical, eh?)

The hardware on the RockPro kit is lighter than that on the StudioMaples—medium-duty versus heavy-duty—although the configuration of stands is the same. Ditto for the pedals: similar quality, but simpler and lighter in construction. The bass drum claws and hoops are more generic, and the toms ship with clear heads.

The biggest difference between the two kits, of course, is the shells. The RockPro uses a combination of basswood and "other hardwoods," and the resulting shell is a bit thicker than Taye's maple drums. And the shells are covered, rather than lacquered. Our metallic-silver kit looked quite nice. In fact, the quality of construction on the kit was high in all respects.

In Use

The interesting thing about conducting this review was that we had two kits that were almost identical but for their shells and finish, side by side in the same room. This meant that we

could immediately judge the performance of the RockPro against the admittedly stiff standard set by the MapleStudio kit.

The results were pretty darn impressive. No, the RockPro drums didn't have quite the depth of tone, warm sustain, or projection of their maple-shelled (and *far* more expensive) siblings. But taken on their own they offered a very pleasing sonic quality and would acquit themselves very well in a wide variety of situations.

I've seen imported kits in this price range where the use of two-ply heads was virtually mandatory in order to get any body from the drums at all. Not in this case. Using the supplied heads, the RockPros put out a very respectable sound. The kick had good body and depth, the toms were all melodic, with decent sustain, and the snare was sensitive and cutting.

The hardware also performed well, and for the jobbing drummer the lighter-weight (yet still double-braced) stands might in fact prove preferable to Taye's heavier stuff. I did have one minor complaint about the bass drum pedal. The pedal's action was fine—smooth and fast—but the beater had a large, cylindrical felt head. This seemed to give the impact of the beater on the head a somewhat mushy feel. It wasn't optimum for the drum sound, either. So I swapped it for the more modern design of the StudioMaple kit's beater. Much better: improved balance and a punchier sound. The difference in cost between these two beaters can't be more than a few dollars, so I'd suggest that Taye make the upgrade. The kit really is nice enough to deserve it.

Conclusion

When the previously mentioned friend asked about the price of the RockPro drums, I looked hard at the review kit. I saw a six-piece kit, with an attractive and durable laminate finish. I saw a full hardware package (you can mount three cymbals on these babies) with stable, smooth, and functional stands, mounts, and pedals. I saw high-quality heads, hoops, and lugs, and suspension mounts on all four toms. It was built to a price point, certainly, by virtue of the shell material. But it was still a well-built kit that looked and sounded good enough to be used with pride on any stage or session. "Probably lists for \$1,200," I ventured, "with a street price of around a grand or a little less."

Once again Taye fooled me. The retail price of our review kit is \$795. At that price these aren't just "better drums for less money." They're a steal!

THE NUMBERS

StudioMaple configuration: 18x22 kick drum, 8½x10 and 9x12 suspended rack toms, 14x14 floor tom, and 5x14 snare drum. All maple shells, with natural maple lacquer finish. Heavy-duty, double-braced hardware package includes boom cymbal stand, straight cymbal stand, snare stand, hi-hat stand, bass drum pedal, and slide-track tom holder with cymbal boom.

List price:**\$1,995**

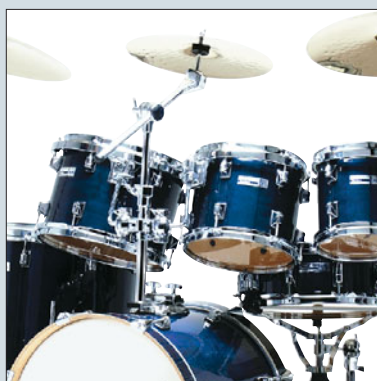
RockPro configuration: 16x22 kick drum, 8x8, 8½x10, 9x12, and 11x14 toms (all suspended), and 5½x14 snare drum. Basswood/hardwood shells, with metallic-silver covered finish. Medium-duty, double-braced hardware package includes boom cymbal stand, straight cymbal stand, snare stand, hi-hat stand, bass drum pedal, and traditional tom holder with cymbal boom.

List price:**\$795**

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