

Premier Series Drums

The British Are Coming...Again!

HITS

maple and Gen-X shells each offer distinctive sonic characteristics

excellent construction quality

unparalleled chrome plating

by Chap Ostrander

Premier has drawn upon their eight decades of drum building to create a completely redesigned line of high-end drumkits, which they have designated simply as the Premier Series. Premier's goal was to offer drummers a choice of hand-crafted drums with the warmth of maple, the clarity of birch, or a combination of both in one shell. Also offered is the option of reinforcing rings within the all-maple and all-birch kits. British studio and touring ace Steve White was the driving force behind the development of the new series. All of the drums are built at the Premier factory in England.

We were sent two of the three wood types to try: the maple and the Gen-X maple/birch combination.

Drum Details

While the Premier Series is offered in three wood types, there are some features common to all of them. For example, the shells are undersized by 3 mm—meaning that the diameter of a 14" shell (for example) is actually 3 mm less than 14". Premier believes that this sizing enhances the sensitivity and tone of the drumhead—and thus the overall drum sound—when combined with the precision of their bearing edge. The drums come with identity plates next to their pewter logo badges, signifying the wood type and year of construction.



Premier Series Maple



Premier Series Gen-X

All tension rods have two washers, which stay with the rod. The inner one is flat and the outer one is a lock washer. The swivel nuts in the lugs have nylon inserts that keep the tension rods from detuning.

The die-cast bass drum claw hooks have rubber liners that hold the hoop securely. The liner extends inside the claw to retain the tension rod. The bass drum spurs fold back against the shell for packing, and they feature convertible rubber feet/spikes.

The lugs, floor-tom leg brackets, and tom mounts are set off the shells with nylon gaskets. The tom mounting system is based on Premier's classic ISO mount, but allows greater variations in set-ups by way of a newly engineered tom bracket with hide-away memory lock. The look of these memory locks is the nicest of any I've seen. They don't look like tubing clamps that were chrome plated and stuck on the legs and tom mounts. Instead, they're rounded, and they complete the shape of the mounts.

My first impression of the lug design was that it was rather simplistic. But it really lets you focus on the drums and the overall look of the kit. The lugs are each mounted onto the shell with two screws, which I have always felt relieves stress on the shell.

Premier's Diamond Chrome process has been legendary for decades. It involves numerous operations and culminates with hand polishing, resulting in a gleaming chrome finish that's unrivaled in the industry.

Maple Drums

Our maple review kit came with what Premier calls "unsupported" shells, meaning that they did not have reinforcing rings. The kit was finished in White Marine Vintage wrap, giving it a classic look.

The bass drum came fitted with PowerStroke 3 batter and front heads, which helped it to produce a solid and powerful sound that was round and full. That fullness seemed to expand, almost like a

volcano of sound. The rack and floor toms had individual voices that spoke well between each other. They too were powerful drums, with tons of warmth.

I found the maple toms and bass drum most fulfilling to play, because the low end of the tone continued to develop after the initial strike. I heard the impact and was then further rewarded by the wave of mid-range and lows booming in, creating a sort of surround effect.

Gen-X Drums

The review set with Gen-X shells was finished in Light Gold Sparkle lacquer, and was simply stunning. The Gen-X drums had the same basic qualities as their maple siblings, with the exception of their response. The Gen-X shell is made up of four "inside" plies of maple with two outer plies of birch. This combination gives you aspects of both wood types at once.

Finnish Birch is known for its clarity, and this certainly held true with the drums I tested. Even though the Gen-X shells had only two plies of birch, they produced a distinctly brighter sound than did the drums made of maple alone. The drums spoke immediately and in full voice. The bass and toms felt more contained than those on the maple kit, due to the punch that they delivered.

The amount of sustain from both kits was comparable, but the maple drums took time to fill out, while the Gen-X models produced a more distinct tone up front (while still possessing some of the warmth of the maple). I'm sure that an all-birch shell would be brighter still.

All of the drums were extremely easy to tune, and their individual voices seemed to flow into each other as I moved between them.

Modern Classic Snares

The snares supplied with each kit were from Premier's stand-alone Modern Classic series, in wood types and finishes to match

the kits. They featured Premier's precision bearing edges, tube lugs, 2.3-mm steel hoops, Nickel Drumworks strainer and butt plate, and Everplay (by Remo) coated batter and hazy snare-side drumheads.

The maple Modern Classic snare that came with the maple Premier Series kit was a 5½x14 with loads of warmth and response. It was a joy to play with brushes, sticks, or rods, and it had a voice that was equally impressive from a whisper to a roar.

The Gen-X kit was supplied with a 6x10 all-birch auxiliary snare and a 7x13 primary drum with the Gen-X hybrid shell. The piercing sound of the 10" snare fit right in with the very direct sound of the Gen-X kit, making it an excellent addition. The 7" snare possessed tons of power, and had to be kept under control at all times. It had the same sensitivity of the other snares, with no apparent limit to its dynamic range. I sent it out on a concert gig with my wife, and while at first the other percussionists in the orchestra thought it "merely a drumset snare" (and therefore unworthy), they soon changed their tune when they played it. I got nothing but raves about the drum.

My personal impression was, if the 7x13 drum has this much sound, you'd probably need a permit to own one in a 14" diameter.

6000 Series Hardware

Both review kits came with Premier's 6000 series hardware, which is quite stylish. As on the tom mounts, the memory locks on the various stands mate with the lower sections and complement the look of the connection. With the exception of the small lock on the arm of the disappearing boom, the memory locks all have nylon sleeves to ensure a solid hold. The legs on all the stands are double-braced, and the feet are made of a soft rubber that provides secure traction. Even the wing screws on the stands have a finish that makes them easy to grip.

The 6073 single bass drum pedal is fully adjustable, with a double chain on a felt-lined track. The bottom plate can fold for packing, but locks on with drumkey screws to be very solid when assembled. An L-shaped key, plus a set of allen wrenches, are mounted on the footboard. You need the key to lock the pedal onto the bass-drum hoop. The size and location of the clamp didn't allow me to apply the key until the pedal was clamped to the drum, but I could easily turn it by hand until the key was needed. The spring tension adjustment locks securely above and below. There are spurs on the footboard and hook-and-loop strips underneath. The pedal comes with a two-sided felt/plastic beater.

The 6015 hi-hat stand features a folding footboard like the bass pedal, with spurs and hook-and-loop strips for security. The legs can be rotated for convenient double-pedal placement, and the multi-level spring adjustment gives you good choices for the tension under your foot. I never felt the pedal "bottom out" while playing, thanks to a cushioned stop built into the rod. The pedal felt solid, smooth, and silent.



The 6013 snare stand utilizes a nylon ball for limitless angle adjustments. It also has a removable basket for easier pack-up (plus you keep your angle adjustment). The hexagonal connection has a flat spot in the middle so that the stand doesn't disengage suddenly if the drumkey screws become loose. (Very thoughtful.) The rubber grips on the basket arms have ribs to minimize contact with the drum.

The 6014 cymbal stand is a solid unit with a base that can be set up in a tight spread for easy placement in close proximity with other hardware, or in a wide spread for greater stability.

The 6016 boom stand is convertible with a disappearing arm.

Got You Covered

Another thoughtful feature from Premier is that the Premier Series drums will be shipped in soft-sided bags as further protection during shipping. These bags feature an outer lining of 1200-denier polyester with 20-mm foam and 450 polyester inside, plus heavy-duty lockable zippers and swivel fasteners on the straps.

Final Thoughts

Premier has done some amazing work in producing these drums. Drummers can choose the shell type that they want, including mixing them up for a truly custom kit. Twenty-nine finishes are available, including wraps, classic lacquers and satins, and high-gloss sparkles. The Premier brand has been relatively dormant at the high end for the past several years, but the introduction of the Premier Series testifies to their being back with serious intent.

THE NUMBERS

Premier Series Maple Model Classic (unsupported shell)	
9x13 Rack Tom	\$ 749
14x14 Floor Tom	\$ 811
16x16 Floor Tom	\$ 840
16x22 Bass Drum	\$1,231
5½x14 Modern Classic Snare Drum	\$ 599
Premier Series Gen-X (Maple/Birch Hybrid) Model	
7x8 Quick Tom	\$ 743
8x10 Quick Tom	\$ 761
9x12 Quick Tom	\$ 796
10x13 Quick Tom	\$ 803
11x14 Quick Tom	\$ 868
16x16 Floor Tom	\$ 901
16x18 Floor Tom	\$ 971
18x22 Bass Drum	\$1,366
6x10 Modern Classic (All-Birch) Auxiliary Snare Drum	\$ 539
7x13 Modern Classic Snare Drum	\$ 579
6000 Series Hardware Package	\$ 770
(includes bass drum pedal, snare stand, hi-hat stand, cymbal stand, and cymbal boom)	
info@premier-percussion.com	