

TRX

Icon Series Cymbals

by Michael Dawson

TRX is a relatively new name in the centuries-old industry of cymbal making, but in the past few years the company has managed to carve out a unique niche for itself, mostly among young contemporary R&B and alternative rock drummers who desire classic Turkish-style cymbals that can handle the extreme playing and dynamic demands of more progressive musical styles. The Icon series is the company's first all-brilliant line, and we were sent a sampling consisting of a 9" splash, 16" and 17" Thin crashes, an 18" Medium crash, a 20" Heavy crash, an 18" Stacker, a 19" China, and a 21" ride.

TWEAKING THE SONIC ENVELOPE

It's difficult to pinpoint what makes a cymbal sound "vintage" versus "modern." The obvious factor is weight: Heavier cymbals are often brighter and louder (modern), and lighter cymbals are often warmer and more delicate (vintage). The Icon line leans significantly toward the heavier side, to provide cutting power and durability, yet the cymbals still have a classic quality to them. How so? We've boiled it down to this: Icon series models have a rich timbre that combines—in varying degrees—warm, complex decay (the sound you hear for a few milliseconds after the initial stick attack) and silvery, glassy sustain (the sound of the cymbal ringing before it dies down to silence). The balance between these two contrasting qualities is what gives these cymbals that modern-meets-vintage flavor.

HI-HATS

The 14" Icon hi-hats (\$550) are designated as medium-heavy, but they're actually a combination of a medium-thin top cymbal and a heavy bottom. They produced a wide, chunky sound when hit with the shoulder of the stick in open or closed positions, and they had a slightly pitchy, silvery sustain. The thinner top cymbal added complexity, especially when hit with the stick tip, and foot chicks were fairly strong. These were loud but warm-sounding cymbals, and they performed surprisingly well at softer, more delicate dynamics.

CRASHES

The 16" (\$375) and 17" (\$400) Thin crashes had a firm feel with a focused and controlled tone. The 16" had a quicker decay,



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THE ICON OBJECTIVE

TRX describes the Icon series as having "the rich, warm tone of vintage cymbals with the brighter, more powerful performance characteristics required by modern players." All Icon cymbals are made with B20 bronze and feature a highly polished brilliant finish.

and it settled into a clear sustain almost immediately after the attack. The 17" was throatier and had a more colorful voice with a longer and more evenly balanced sustain. This cymbal would also work as a crash/ride.

As the Icon crashes get heavier, they become less complex sounding, yet they retain a classic Turkish flavor. The 18" Medium crash (\$425) had a slower attack and a pronounced hum in the lower middle frequencies. It needed to be hit with a firm stroke to open up fully, but it also had good riding capabilities for quieter playing, and the bell sound was strong.

The 20" Heavy model (\$525) was the cleanest-sounding crash of the bunch and proved to be my favorite cymbal in the line. It had a slow, wavelike attack that added a lot of drama and excitement when crashed, and when used as a crash/ride it offered a long, humming sustain that created a giant seamless wash. This cymbal also had a clear and articulate stick sound, so it could easily serve double duty as a medium-light ride.

RIDE AND CHINA

The 21" Icon ride (\$550) is a heavy cymbal that had a pingy attack followed by a short, warm decay and long, glassy sustain. The overtones were prominent, but we had no problem articulating fast ride patterns over the wash. The bell sound was big, bright, and loud enough to cut through just about anything.

The 19" Icon China (\$500) is medium in weight and possessed the explosive attack and trashy decay you would expect from such a cymbal, but it also had a silvery, con-

trolled sustain that kept it from sounding overly harsh, even when hit aggressively.

STACKER AND SPLASH

TRX's Stackers come in 14", 16", 18", and 20" sizes. All four models are medium-thin in weight and feature six circular cutouts around the perimeter. The 18" we were sent for review produced a trashy, dark sound that contrasted very nicely with the bright, clean tone of the 20" Heavy crash. As we experienced with the China, the overtones on the Stacker were more controlled than expected.

The 9" Icon splash (\$215) sounded fragile (in a good way) and glassy, but it had a fairly low pitch. This little cymbal stood strong on its own for quick bursts but also worked well for creating special effects when layered on top of the China or Stacker. The Stacker/splash combo sounded like a beat-up rivet ride with a trashy attack and fairly long, sizzling sustain. Modern jazz drummers like Eric Harland, Mark Guiliana, and Chris Dave use this synthetic-type sound to great effect.

CONCLUSION

If I had to summarize the Icon models in one sentence, I'd say they're strong, modern-sounding cymbals that have a touch of vintage complexity. I don't think hardcore jazzers will ever favor these over their coveted pies from the '50s. But as a contemporary rock/pop drummer with classic cymbal tastes, I'm happy to see that companies are continuing to address the delicate balance between musicality and power.

trxcymbals.com

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