



Dream Cymbals: Energy and Vintage Bliss Series

Dream is determined to offer affordable quality with these two very different cymbal series **Words: Sam Pert Images: Eckie**

There are those who assert that Chinese bell and gong manufacture pre-dates Turkish cymbal craft; indeed, it is claimed to date back

HEADS UP DREAM CYMBALS

Prices:

Energy Series	
14" Hi-hat	£174.99
16" Crash	£96.98
Vintage Bliss Series	
17" Crash/ride	£93.99
18" Crash/ride	£107.99
19" Crash/ride	£113.99
22" Crash/ride	£149.99

▲ UPBEATS:

Vintage Bliss – dark and atmospheric
Versatility of crash/rides
Aggression and power of Energy
crashes

▼ DOWNBEATS:

Thin bell of Vintage Bliss crash/rides

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over 2,000 years, even being the inspiration to the Turkish equivalents. Whichever came first, the Wuhan region of China has long been renowned for the production of musical cymbals, so it is no coincidence that this is where Dream cymbals and gongs are handcrafted, in a family-owned factory that has been devoted to the profession for generations. Dream was established in 2005 as a partnership between this family of Chinese gongsmiths and a team of Canadian designers; it embraces the ancient ways of working with fire, hammer and bronze to create unique instruments.

Dream cymbals represent superb quality, traditional craftsmanship and fantastic value for a varied target audience. For the price of the cymbals up for review here, the appeal is bound to be universal. We have been sent models from two of Dream's cymbals series: the Energy series and the Vintage Bliss series. As you may have guessed, these are quite different in kind

to one another, with the Energy series being advertised as loud and penetrative, and the Vintage Bliss providing warmth and richness. Let's get them on the stands and see for ourselves. From the Energy Series, 14" hats and a 16" crash; from the Vintage Bliss series, crash/rides in 17", 18" 19" and 22".

ENERGY

The Energy series have a unique appearance compared to Dream's other cymbals, in that they have an unlathed bell, and a large one at that. There is minimal lathing and light hammering, and the cymbals are of considerable weight, particularly the hi-hats. All of these qualities focus the weight towards the centre and result in a loud, penetrative note, rich in high-end tones and attack. I loved the 16" Energy crash for its raw aggression. Its response is instant and merciless as a wall of white noise hits you. It also has an impressive sustain, not decaying

until well into the following bar. This is a fantastic high-energy cymbal that adds power and lift to grooves. The machine-hammering on this cymbal assists in the overall modern, detailed sound.

Onto the 14" Energy hi-hats, the top hat is as described above but the bottom hat is heavier and completely unlathed on both sides, giving it that 'just stepped out of the furnace' look. Sticking is strong, pronounced, clean and bright – not the kind of ear-piercingly bright that leaves you wincing in agony, but more than sufficient for cutting through some considerable volume produced by your band mates. Played tightly, articulation is particularly precise, and some high-pitched but musical overtones are evident, even with a lighter stick. Loosen the foot to let the hats grind and the wash is so gritty it will leave grazes on your knees if you're not careful. The combination of raw and polished cymbals means that with these hats you're not only getting the high-end tones but a full-bodied



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bark and chop, not to mention a very strong time-keeping ‘chick’ when they are stepped to accompany beefy ride patterns – another positive for loud applications.

VINTAGE BLISS

The crash/rides in the Vintage Bliss series have very shallow tonal grooves from minimal or ‘micro’ lathing. There is light, even hammering across the whole surface of the cymbals. Then, the small hand-administered

‘pockmarks’ are few, far between and also shallow, predominantly towards the centre and just enough to add to the complexity of a note already rich and dark from the thinness of the cymbals (you can easily bend them with your hands). They have a low profile too, with a small bell.

The 22” crash/ride was first out of the box and on the stand. The first thing to note was the softness of the cymbal under my stick, the lightweight yet resilient quality setting the cymbal quivering with

each stroke. This added to the warmth of the note. In contrast to the Energy series, the Vintage Bliss crash/rides have more subtlety and require more of an intuitive approach in order to get the best from them. Beginning with quiet strokes on the surface, very delicate dynamics are achievable. The Dream website describes this cymbal’s undertones as possessing ‘an edge of dragon’s breath’, a metaphor that made me think of my old French teacher. Once that memory was out of my head, I understood what it meant. And it was true: the tones brewed and simmered with warm, almost fiery qualities. The pitch is low and dark, but with increased intensity the stick response cools it down.

When trying out the smaller crash/rides in this range, they were a lot more manageable when it came to crashing the edges, and I felt I could be more expressive as a result. Those drummers who are used to playing larger crash/rides may well prefer the 22”, and for those who need more crash than ride, then the 17” or 18” would no doubt be preferable. Personally, I

found the 19” to be just the right balance. Tonally, it was the most consistent out of the models in this particular range, with a crash whose satisfying sustain sat beautifully over tight grooves. To ride, none of these cymbals are overly specific, and the bells are somewhat understated, but that may be a quality you’re looking for.

CONCLUSION

Can it be? Another smaller cymbal manufacturer giving the big names a run for their money? I think so. Dream’s product is of fine quality, offering a broad palette of sounds achieved through traditional methods. As with all cymbals, you need to get out and try these for yourself, but if you need a raw, aggressive and dynamic crash or pair of hats, you won’t go far wrong with the Energy series. The Vintage Bliss series are also desirable, but for the opposite reason: warm, dark, rich tones coaxed from a cymbal with which you will develop a connection, owing to its character and versatility.

