

FIDOCK

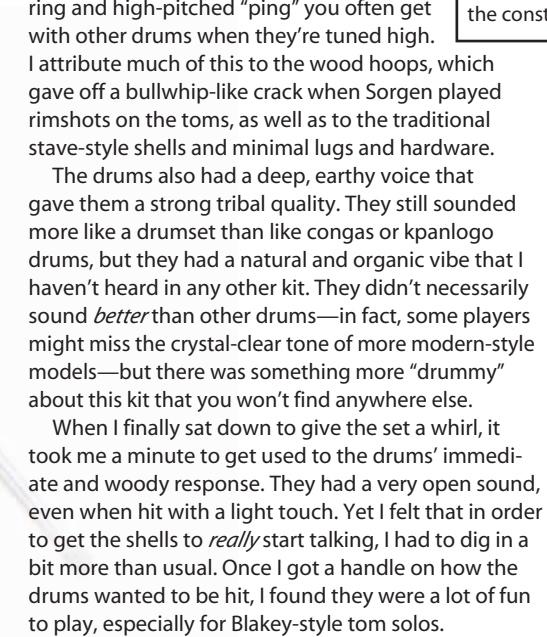
BLACKWOOD BEBOP KIT AND FATBOY SNARES

Review by Michael Dawson • Photos by Stephen Wood

We first became aware of the Australian-based Fidock Drums back in 2008, when we reviewed its stave-shell, wood-hoop Tasmanian blackwood and bubinga snares. Those drums had a unique sound: open and tuneful, yet warm and focused. When we heard Fidock was now making full drumkits, as well as some oddly sized snares, we jumped at the chance to check them out. For this month's review, we got our hands on a gorgeous blackwood bebop kit and a pair of super-deep 9x13 FatBoy snares. Let's start with the kit.

BLACKWOOD BOP
Fidock's bebop kit (\$6,000, including suspension mounts) is made from Australian blackwood, which is renowned for its natural resonance and tonal quality. The shells are constructed with the same staving methods used on the snare drums, and the reinforcement hoops are sculpted into the shell rather than built from a separate piece of wood and then glued to the interior shell wall. The kit includes an 8-lug 14x18 bass drum, a 6-lug 8x12 rack tom, and an 8-lug 14x14 floor tom. All of the drums come with mini-tube lugs and

matching wood hoops, which are made from a single piece of timber that's cut into two semicircles and then joined together. These simply designed drums feature a mild satin finish and have very little hardware connected to the shell. Fidock's minimalist approach is used, as company director Stephan Fidock explains, "to minimize interference with the acoustic properties of the grain." These drums are also extremely lightweight, which is great for gigging pros who have to schlep their gear into and out of clubs every night.



FATBOY SNARES
Fidock's super-deep yet skinny 9x13 FatBoy snares are unusually sized in an effort to supply thick and beefy low-end punch without sacrificing stick response or snare sensitivity. On most average-size snares, such as Don Henley-type tones are achievable only by detun-



ing the heads to the point where they have very little rebound. That wasn't the case with the FatBoys. Even at a medium tension, they gave off a chesty punch, with the addition of a crisp attack and sizzling snare response. These 8-lug FatBoys have very thin shells (5–6 mm), which are staved from hand-selected blackwood or myrtle timber. Like the bebop kit, the reinforcement hoops are built into the shell. These re-rings are sized differently in order to maximize tone and snare response; the top ring is cut thinner for more sensitivity, while the bottom one is thicker for a punchier

TONAL TIMBERS

All Fidock drums are hand carved from native Australian timber, which company director Stephan Fidock selects while venturing around the country looking for the most musical wood he can find. As Fidock explains on the company Web site, "We look for density and consistency of grain and listen for tone and resonance. Our aim is to retain the tonal qualities we first heard in the timber throughout the construction and finishing process."

attack. Like all Fidock snares, FatBoys come with mini-tube lugs, Trick throw-offs, Evans heads, Canopus "wet" twenty-strand snare wires, and matching wood hoops. Double 45-degree round-over edges are used for additional warmth, attack, and overtone control. We were sent two FatBoys to review: a shiny French-polished Tasmanian myrtle drum (priced on application) and a natural golden-brown version built from blackwood (\$1,350). Both models were remarkably well-constructed, extremely lightweight, and surprisingly easy to work with. I had no problem fitting them in my snare stand. But there is an obvious limit to how low they can be positioned, depending on your particular stand. The thick wood hoops add about 1" to the overall diameter. Because these are 13" drums, there was plenty of extra room in my snare basket. Had they been 14", though, it might have been a tight squeeze.

Playing the FatBoys was a lot of fun. The myrtle drum was slightly brighter and louder than the blackwood. But both snares exhibited similar open, earthy tones, and they blended very well with the bebop kit. When tuned medium to high, the FatBoys were crisp, sensitive, and sonorous, with a nice blend of midrange overtones and chunky attack. Jazz drummers will love these drums because they can be tuned tight for clarity and still retain a solid, thick tone. The wood hoops also added extra "knock" to rimshots and rimclicks.

Where the FatBoys really shined, however, was at lower tunings. Before I had a chance to play either of these drums, I received a suggestion from Stephan Fidock: "Tune it low and put your wallet on it." Wow! If you're a fan of that pillowy Al Jackson sound, these are drums to check out. They sounded deep and thumpy yet spoke with a clear and articulate—not tubby—voice. The extra-deep sound wasn't a special effect that I had to force out of them but rather was a natural tone that these drums were designed to produce. Session players, take note.

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