

REVIEW

ACD - Artemis Series Kit



ACD Artemis Series

The goddess of the wilderness, the hunt and fertility becomes a key player in Animal Custom Drums' bid to lead the pack with the Artemis Series

words: Ian Croft Images: Eckie

Seems that Artemis - we're talking Greek mythology here - was the daughter of Leto and Zeus, and the twin of Apollo. Artemis was the goddess of the wilderness, the hunt and wild animals, and fertility. She was also one of the Olympians and a virgin goddess. Her main gig, though, was to roam mountain forests and uncultivated land with her nymphs in attendance hunting for lions, panthers, hinds and stags. When she wasn't killing stuff, she helped in protecting and seeing to animals' wellbeing, safety and reproduction. See, it is true, you do learn something new every day.

With thoughts of nymphs, goddesses and the like banished, best that we get on with the task in hand and have a closer look at the UK's newest custom drum builder's bid to get its name and products out into the public buying consciousness, here in the form of the Artemis Series drums. Animal Custom Drums (or to you and me for space reasons ACD) made more than a large splash when it showed this very kit at *Drummer Live*, allowing many, many hooligan drummers to make their mark upon its virgin white coated heads. With a set of new heads and a quick wipe-down, the kit has arisen in the *Drummer* offices and we are about to set about it! But, before we do it might be worth quickly explaining that ACD is hell bent on 'producing the highest quality handmade custom drums without

compromise whilst maintaining affordability'. Which, on the face of it is a damn fine goal. ACD does build custom drums in the form of the Elite series, but that's another story. Artemis drums are a ready-built line aiming to get ACD product into your local pro drum store with 100 per cent birch shells available in all sizes that can be covered in a wrap (as this review kit is), stained, or completed with a lacquer finish - you get to decide.

Construction

Well, the first thing evident is that ACD has chosen very carefully not only how it builds its drums but how they're accessorized too. The review set is finished in one of many potential wraps that ACD offers and is known as Black Oyster Ripple. It looks like a very cool, hip old school finish that won't look out of date in say 10 years time: timeless too then. If you go for the full five-piece kit, then your Artemis snare will come with a Trick GS007 snare throw, that, like the man in the books or movies, is smart and sexy. Head selection is Aquarian coated Super-2's on the batter sides with single-ply clear Classic heads resonating on the bottom of all toms. The snare demonstrates a texture coated Power-Dot batter head with a regular Aquarian snare head and what looks like a brandless, albeit high quality set of snare wires. The bass drum parades a coated single-ply Super-Kick on the batter side with a white ported and pre-muffled front resonance Regulator head. The three toms

Heads Up

PRICES:

22 x 20" Kick drum
12 x 9" Rack tom
14 x 12" Rack/floor tom
16 x 14" Rack/floor tom
14 x 6" Snare drum
RRP inc snare £1800 - w/out snare £1515
Three-piece 22", 12" & 14" or 16" toms £1100
Includes RIMS suspension system for all toms
* Hardware shown in images not included

UPBEATS:

- ▲ Warm, powerful sound
- ▲ Flawless build quality
- ▲ Value

DOWNBEATS:

- ▼ Are you sure that's not maple?

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are all suspended via a RIMS suspension system, promoting maximum resonance when played.

The Artemis lugs on the snare are of a 'bridge' design that means less metal-to-shell contact, although isolating gaskets are employed all around the shells where any metal comes into contact with the shell. The lug that you will find on the toms and kick drum looks somewhat twixt Pearl and Gretsch and is nicely sculptured without dominating the shell. The 12" rack tom is cranked, tuned and tinkered with via six lugs; the 14" and 16" rack/floor toms get an extra couple of lugs allowing you the luxury of eight aside on those babies when it comes time to fooling with pitches and notes. The bass drum has 10 lugs front and back and the claw is particularly cute, cool and compact with all rods worked by a drum key.

In Use

It might be worth mentioning right off the bat that I have not been a particular fan of birch wood drums over the years as I have always found them to be too aggressive

and hard sounding, with birch producing too much attack for my personal liking and have instead heavily favoured maple as my shell choice. However, and this is going to be a huge 'however', after only just a few nano-seconds playing the Artemis set I think I reached an epiphany of sorts and have suddenly come to love the birch sound that the Artemis drums throw out. Warmth? There's enough warmth produced from these drums to keep the entire population of Siberia cozy through the deepest and darkest of winters. Santa himself would become confused if too many of these sets were sold, as he'd think that summer had become perpetual! Certainly the head choice of the coated Aquarians is absolutely spot on and they do assist in rounding out the note produced, but I was gob-smacked at the levels of bottom end that these drums offered up. If I had not received information from ACD that these were 100 per cent birch shelled drums, I would have argued until I was blue in the face that the shells were definitely maple - but they are not!

Apart from the wondrous warmth, tone and articulation that the Artemis set sounds exactly that: a set. Each drum sits perfectly in position with its other family members with nothing sounding out of kilter, and once you get started playing melodic tom fills, there's no stopping you. These drums are more

addictive than crack cocaine (not that I can substantiate that of course). It's like hearing John Bonham sitting in with Al Jackson as you get that big Bonham sound, but you also get oodles of the Al Jackson warmth - kind of Motown meets Metal.

The snare drum offers masses of crack as each backbeat resounds around the room with ghost strokes being beautifully relayed with plenty of dynamic range available. A small turn of the key and the drum produces a healthy 'crack' that won't startle, but will keep the troops in line and the three toms become hypnotic with their individual characteristic tones, fullness of sound and resonating bigness.

And then you get to the bass drum, all 22 x 20" of it, delivering a low-end thud that might cause concern to those living in fragile buildings, or near the San Andreas Fault Line as it makes your trousers flap uncontrollably whenever you hit the batter head with the bass drum beater. It should also be stated that as the bass drum is un-drilled - meaning nothing is attaching itself to the shell - the resonant note is perfectly round and oh so big that I was expecting a landslide of cut timber to come rolling out of the heavens and upon me each time I hit the '1'. Marking the '1' with this drum is child's play and if ever you needed to reinforce the '1', then this drum will deliver in such large quantities that 2, 3 and 4 become almost unnecessary. A thoroughly enjoyable playing experience. **D**

Conclusion

I can't quite believe that I'm sitting here getting so irrationally excited by a set of birch drums, but I am and that's all there is to it. Face it Crofty, you've met your match - you got punched out in the first round and you're laying face down on the canvass just waiting for your corner second to throw in the towel. Head throbbing and dribbling blood is what you want a set of drums to deliver and as Animal's Artemis drums deliver so much, you become tempted to go back to the company and politely enquire if they might have just underestimated the price and that you still owe them a further wadge of wedge? Luckily, you won't and besides, once you get sat behind these fabulous drums you'll forget all about the outside world and the abhorrent things that humans do to each other and the waste and greed that surrounds us every day and say 'To heck with all that, I've got a set of Artemis drums and my world is perfect, come and get on board people'. I aren't even think how good a set of the Animal Custom Elite drums might sound, but I'm certainly up for finding out. If you have even half an ounce of sense, you'll run/cycle speedily along to your nearest pro-store and ask, 'Where are the Artemis drums then, because I need some right now Mr Dealer!' I foresee a great future for Animal Custom Drums, not to mention a positive knock-on for UK drummers: if you also want to keep your carbon footprint down and reduce global warming, then buying British is definitely a positive place to start. GRRRRreat drums baby.

