Reviews

"The full-size 20" cymbal actually flexes and shimmers when struck, which feels fantastic under-stick": EFnote Pro review

EFnote's flagship stage-worthy e-kit offers some interesting functionality and a huge range of configurations

(Image: © Tom Bradley)

MusicRadar Verdict ★★★★½

A well put together kit which certainly looks the part for home or stage use and is easy to use. Some of the sounds may need work to get the most out of them, but this is a very capable e-kit.

Pros
- A good-looking kit with full-size drum shells and cymbal pads
- Clever two-part module and stage box
- Loads of routing options and separate bus mixes

Cons
- Rather loud acoustically, particularly the snare rim
- Limited options for in-built effects
- Some lacklustre samples

EFNOTE PRO REVIEW: WHAT IS IT?

Just a few short years ago the idea of a full-sized, acoustic-shelled electronic drum kit was enough to have us excitedly parting with our well-earned cash. Now, with every big player in the e-kit market (and some new ones) jumping onboard the trend, the aesthetics and physical size alone aren't necessarily enough to compete. Thankfully, with a focus on live use, EFnote has taken some interesting steps with its Pro series kit and packed in some extremely promising features that, on paper at least, make it stand out from the crowd.

The most notable of these features is the split module design which uses a small touch screen control surface connected to a rugged stage-box style module. This compact cube offers a generous number of inputs for kick, snare (plus separate side-rim), five toms, hi-hats, ride, crash 1, crash 2, crash 3, crash 4/fx, crash 5/splash and crash 6/china.

(Image credit: EFnote)

Each of the cymbal inputs also feature separate bell triggers except for the china. Overall this adds up to a massive 15 separate trigger inputs (not including the separate cymbal bells) which just about clinches Roland's TD-50 module at 14. Most impressive though are the 12 assignable XLR outputs which offer individual control over separate instruments.

These can be easily reassigned in the module and sent out depending on requirements. There is also Bluetooth connectivity, USB audio, dual mono line in and out jacks, plus jack or XLR monitor inputs. Currently, the module features 23 editable kit presets although that looks due to grow as a handful of new kits have been announced.

EFNOTE PRO REVIEW: PERFORMANCE & VERDICT

(Image credit: EFnote)

EFnote offers a huge number of configuration options with many possible setups across its big-boy 700 series and more compact 500 series - setups are named things like Traditional, Modern, Power, Heavy and Technical, which all differ in terms of number and dimensions of drums. You should have no problem finding a configuration that mirrors your acoustic setup.

The set we have for review is the 703 Power Set, finished in a white (almost silver) sparkle wrap which comprises the standard 700 configuration: 20" kick, 14" snare, 11" rack, 15" floor, 14" hats, 16" crash and 20" ride. Plus an expansion pack containing 13" floor tom, 18" dark crash and 18" china. All hardware such as cymbal stands and tom mounts are included with the kit and expansions except for a hi-hat stand and drum throne.

Other than some slightly unusual tom sizes, the thing that we're struck by is the full-size cymbal pads which even feature fine detailing, giving them traits of acoustic cymbals. The ride for instance, rather than being completely smooth has subtle dents across its surface to give it a hand-hammered feel (which is actually much cooler than I'm describing it). This full-size 20" cymbal actually flexes and shimmers when struck which feels fantastic under-stick. It's perhaps a little too thick and weighty to say it reacts just like a real cymbal, but its darn close and the size really helps.

ALSO CONSIDER

Roland VAD706
Alesis Strata Prime
GEWA G9 Workstation

The other cymbals play well too with 360-degree triggering meaning the expression and dynamic range is maintained across the surface; even on the bell. Each cymbal, including the hi-hats have separate bell triggering, which is a lovely touch.

The hi-hats use an optical sensor for foot control and the whole pad plugs in with just one digital cable. We found that they reacted consistently once configured in the settings.

The touchscreen interface of the module is well thought out with a modern aesthetic and is straightforward to get to grips with. There are three physical rotary dials for tweaking parameters while everything else is on screen. Of the 23 preset kits, there is a fairly even mix in terms of style, with a few rock and metal kits, jazz and blues, 70's/80's and some electronic. The samples themselves are a mixed bag - some good and some not so good.

(Image credit: EFnote)

Some of the kick drum and tom sounds in particular are absolutely stunning, but others lack the oomph and resonance that we'd like, especially on a kit that costs this much. The thing each kit shares in common though is that they are all utterly bone-dry. As the stage box is designed to run out through a mixer, there is a very limited inbuilt FX engine - with just a compressor, EQ and high-pass filter. With no inbuilt reverb, you'll want to run it through a mixer of some kind if using the kit at home.

Most of the snares are quite lively with plenty of natural overtones. Tweaking the tuning and dampening settings helps slightly although the dampening doesn't always work as planned. The cymbal samples are for the most part of an extremely high standard, offering a wide dynamic range.

EFNOTE PRO REVIEW: HANDS-ON DEMOS

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EFNOTE PRO REVIEW: SPECIFICATION

- **Configuration:** 20" kick, 14" snare, 11" rack, 15" floor tom, 14" hats, 16" crash and 20" ride, plus expandion pack; 13" floor tom, 18" dark crash and 18" china. All cymbals 3-zone and dual-zone toms
- **Hi-Hat control:** Optical
- **Kits:** 23 edible kit presets, 100 user drum kits
- **Other module features:** Built-in recorder, full-colour capacitive touchscreen, display foot light, smartphone tray
- **Connectivity:** Bus out - 12x XLR with ground lift; line out - 2x 1/4" TS phone; phones out - 1x 1/4" stereo, 1x 1/8" stereo; monitor in - 2x XLR/TRS combo line in; USB audio - 12ch out (48kHz/24bit) / 2ch In (48kHz/16bit), Mac/Windows ASIO; MIDI in/out; Bluetooth audio input and MIDI In/Out, 5-pin DIN
- **Contact:** EFnote

Tom Bradley

Tom is a professional drummer with a long history of performing live anywhere from local venues to 200,000 capacity festivals. Tom is a private drum tutor, in addition to teaching at the BIMM Institute in Birmingham. He is also a regular feature writer and reviewer for MusicRadar, with a particular passion for all things electronic and hybrid drumming.