

MEINL ARTIST CONCEPT MODEL STACKS



From £309 *Want trash? Meinl's signature stacks will have you looking for a new accent*

WORDS: **STUART WILLIAMS**

Stacking cymbals is by no means a new idea, but in recent times, it has certainly gained a lot of popularity. The idea being that a pair (or more) of stacked cymbals can offer an alternative to your regular splashes, crashes or china cymbals when it comes to keeping time or accenting parts within your grooves or fills: it's another voice. As with any 'effect' sound, the beauty of stacks is that it's the resulting sound that matters, and they can often add up to a lot more than the sum of their parts. This means that inexpensive or even damaged cymbals can be given a new lease of life by pairing them up with other cymbals, rather than being discarded or moved on. However, it doesn't always work, and varying sizes, profiles and metals don't always mix well, resulting in clanky overtones rather than percussive tone. Plenty of companies offer a range of stacks - Meinl included - however this latest collection has been selected to match and put together by Meinl's stack-whacking artist roster: Luke Holland, Anika Nilles, Matt Halpern, Thomas Lang, Matt Garstka and Benny Greb.

Build

With a total of 14 pieces of metal in the line-up, there's a lot of variation with sizes, materials and finishes all being blended to achieve the trashy, tonal cocktail. In order of size is Benny Greb's 8" Crasher Hats (three mini-hats and a doughnut-style 'crasher'), next is the Luke Holland Bullet Stack (12" Classics Custom vented splash, 16" slotted/vented crash). Matt Garstka's Fat Stack pairs 16" vented china with an 18" crash, while Matt Halpern's Double Down Stack is an 18" China and a 16" crash. Thomas Lang's Super Stack is a brace of Classics Custom (18" china, 18" crash) while Anika Nilles has opted for a whopping 18" pair of Deep Hats.

In a brilliant move, which means you won't need to order additional stands for the hi-hat

Also try...



1 PAISTE PSTX

We say: "These effects cymbals from Paiste are available on a budget, and feature plenty of trash-inducing holes."



2 SABIAN EFFECTS RANGE

We say: "With the exception of the Ballistic crash, these cymbals will work in any style, and make a complementary addition to any set-up."

PAIRING

While there are 'correct' ways to couple the stacks together, there is also a lot of room within this to try different configurations, including separating the cymbals entirely!

models, Meinl has also supplied a fixed-clutch, clamp-mounted X-hat with the Anika Nilles and Benny Greb models.

Hands On

These being artist-designed models, there are obviously 'preferred' configurations for the default placement of top/bottom cymbals in each stack. Indeed, they're all labelled too. Logic also dictates this for the most part, but the lack of visual clues provided by Meinl means that it is quite easy to place the cymbals in different inversions and orders (which isn't necessarily a bad thing at all).

For the purposes of this, however, we started by checking we had the cymbals

'correct' before experimenting with alternative placements. The Crasher Hats are tight yet trashy sounding, with a sound that lends itself to emulating electronic hats, without the overbearing brightness of some mini-hats. Meanwhile the Deep Hats deliver a huge - yet still soft - closed sound. They're dark, thick and have an old-school vibe that made us want to play the intro to

EVERY ONE OF THESE PAIRINGS HAS ITS OWN VOICE, AND THAT COULDN'T BE MORE IMPORTANT WITH ARTIST MODELS



FINISHES

The Artist Concept Models use a range of finishing processes, from Anika Nilles' sandblasted hats, to the raw grit of Matt Garstka's Fat Stack, or the modern sheen of the Thomas Lang Super Stack's brilliant finish



TUNING

You can shorten the decay of each stack by tensioning the wingnut on your cymbal stand for added versatility

X-HAT FACTOR

The Anika Nilles Deep Hats and Benny Greb Crasher Hats are supplied with a Meinl MXH X-Hat (worth £49) in the box

'Superstition' ad infinitum. Both blend in well, not unlike loud shakers, and while the intention here is for them to be set closed, we had a lot of fun placing both sets on a regular hi-hat stand in place of traditional hi-hats.

Both the Super Stack and Bullet Stack deliver a more modern stack sound, and while they cut with razor precision, they aren't brash and we could see them fitting well in a range of genres. The sound decays quickly, even under very little tension, but tighten them down and you have an even shorter sound that still keeps its aggression. Finally,

there's the Matt Halpern and Matt Garstka models. While Garstka's is (to our ears) the most angry of the bunch - all throaty, loud bark that demands to be crashed - Matt Halpern's is surprisingly 'outside' of what we might expect. The tonality is subtle and almost complex, urging us to spend as much time riding on it as we did trying to pick out accents in the first place.

Every one of these pairings has its own voice, and that couldn't be more important with artist models. That said, we'd urge you to not be driven either way by your preconceptions in this regard, as this range is extremely versatile, regardless of the artist who selected it. The variation that can be

achieved within each stack via placement and nut tension is great fun, and it's easy to forget that every one of these cymbals can be used solo as well as within its stack, which makes it feel like there's a lot of value in finding new sounds. We love the fact that the range isn't exclusively made up of high-end metals from the Meinl range, and while some of the prices are high for what might not be your staple sounds, a bit of Googling reveals that in some cases these stacks are more affordable ('street prices') than piecing together a stack using equivalents from Meinl's catalogue. **R**

VERDICT: There's something for everyone within the Artist Concept Models range. While some might be a serious outlay, it's quality and value across the board.

BUILD QUALITY



PLAYABILITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



RHYTHM RATING



Essential spec



PRICES

£309 Thomas Lang Super Stack: 18" Classics Custom vented china/18" Classics Custom vented crash, brilliant finish

£318 Luke Holland Bullet Stack: 16" Byzance vented/slotted crash, sandblasted finish/12" Classics Custom splash, brilliant finish

£468 Benny Greb Crasher Hats: 3x 8" mini-hats, 1x 8" crasher, raw/natural finish

£535 Matt Garstka Fat Stack: 18" Byzance vented crash/18" Byzance china, raw/traditional finish

£562 Matt Halpern Double Down Stack: 17" Byzance crash/18" Byzance china, raw/natural finish

£625 Anika Nilles Deep Hats: 2x18" Byzance hats, sandblasted finish

EXTRAS

Meinl MXH X-Hat (Deep Hats and Crasher Hats)

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