

Used drum set purchasing advice – class 101 do's & don'ts!

My name is Wilbur, the owner of Melody Music Shop LLC. I have played drums for over 30 years and built / sold 1000+ drum sets in my 20 years of experience working / owning a successful drum shop.

As Christmas season nears, I hope to help educate 1st time buyers with some important buying tips when purchasing their first drum set for themselves or their loved ones.

Is the set a "name brand" set?

There are too many names to list here but a few solid brand names you can't go wrong with are: Pearl, Tama, Yamaha, Ludwig, and Gretsch. These manufacturers make affordable, quality, entry level kits that are good enough to be used out live (or in the studio) at any skill level.

Having built 1000+ sets and feeling the quality of the parts in my own two hands, dealing with the ease of assembly, and experiencing the tone after building these sets and many, many other alternative brand names, I can tell you with 100% confidence the above mentioned sets will be of good quality per dollar value. Their parts / components almost never fail and are easily found at any local drum shop should you ever need them replaced.

Many customers come in to our shop looking for parts for a couple of MAJOR brand name sets that I have not mentioned above. The same types of problems (failing points) continue to happen to these manufacturers often and it blows my mind how they continue their "success". The parts from these manufacturers are not readily available by any drum shops or online distributors and are very hard to get from the manufacturer directly as their customer service chain has proven to be difficult to produce by the customer and myself (the dealer).

A quality set also has a much better resale / trade in value. Think of your purchase as an "investment". If you can buy your first complete drum set brand new for less than \$500, buyer beware! Re-read above and read below for more details.

What is included in the set / what is its condition?

"I just bought a used drum set for \$150!" – deal of the century right???

How many drums were included? What pieces of "hardware" (cymbals / snare / hi-hat stands, bass drum pedal, and stool) were included? What cymbals were included? What heads were included? What is the condition / quality of these things?

I've seen this happen over and over again and it kills me to see the look in their eyes when –I- have to be

the “bad” guy to break it to them what they really got / need to make things right.

THEY COULD HAVE BOUGHT A -BRAND NEW-, QUALITY DRUM SET WITH EVERYTHING INCLUDED FOR LESS THAN WHAT IT’S GOING TO COST THEM TO MAKE SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING.

Your set should have at least 4 “pieces” or **drums** – bass drum, snare, tom 1 and tom 2. Anything more is “bonus”. Cymbals and stands do not count as “pieces”.

Heads – Are they good quality and in good condition? Do they look like they have been “beat down” (abused)? Take a look at the tops AND the bottoms. If they look worn, chances are they are – and they’re going to break soon if the person hasn’t played them properly / taken good care of them. Even worse are the “new” looking “cheap” heads that look like they have no play on them but are actually so thin they break after 10 hits with a drum stick in the hands of the wrong person; these type of heads typically come on your cheap “\$300 for a brand new complete drum set!” deal = FAIL. Re-read above and read below for more details.

Cost of each tom / snare head = \$15 average; bass drum \$35+. Total cost to replace all the heads of a used 4 piece set with quality, durable ones - \$160

Hardware (stands, etc) – Do they function? What is included / missing? These parts sting your pocket book a lot more as each piece cost \$60 plus on average for –quality- components. Total cost to replace the hardware of an entire kit with quality, durable ones - \$300+

Cymbals – How many are included? What kind are they? What brand are they? What is their condition? Can YOU tell if anything is wrong with them?

A typical set of cymbals on a drum set will consist of a pair of hi-hat cymbals (usually 13” to 14” in diameter), a crash cymbal (16” to 18” in diameter), and a ride cymbal (18” to 20” in diameter). Anything else deviated from this is a “piece meal” (as I call it) or some sub-par offering of a cymbal set which offers lesser tone and durability.

An individual cymbal may be near breakage but it won’t show how close it is to doing so to an untrained individual. If not mounted or played properly, it may crack sooner than others = \$\$\$

A complete quality starter cymbal pack from a name brand company (Zildjian, Sabian, Paiste, Meinl) will cost \$250+. An individual cymbal, \$100+. If you’re not sure what you’re doing, it is ill-advised that you buy used ones.

Trust me when I tell you not to buy the used cymbals from ANY of the drummers I know that are hard hitters! New cymbals now have greater warranties than ever before making the investment in new worth the little extra cost over used.

Can you put it together / tune it up to sound good?

What we do at Melody Music Shop LLC is PRICELESS. It takes myself (or my trained staff) 1 hour plus to properly build and tune a drum set to studio / stage “ready to be mic’d up” tuning. We make all of our drum sets sound great when they go out the door because we only sell quality sets that utilize quality components, heads, and cymbals and we know exactly what we’re doing when we build / tune them.

I can’t imagine the frustration of being a 1st time buyer unboxing their 1st set and staring at all the pieces! It must take hours to fuss with it (never ever being close to proper tuning) and there’s a LOT of trash / boxes left over afterwards. I hate that part.

Conclusion

I strongly urge you to ask me (or my drum staff) if you have any questions on your next drum equipment purchase. We’re friendly, knowledgeable and love to help as many as we can! Please feel free to call us or contact us via email. Our information can easily be found here at www.melodymusicshop.com

Thank you and take care!

Wilbur
Owner / President
Melody Music Shop LLC
Bloomington, IN