

Vulcan Dark Master Cymbals



Italian artistry meets Turkish craftsmanship in an exciting new addition to the cymbal world

Words: Adam Jones

PRICES:
from £199

Launched in the UK in the final months of 2019, Vulcan is an all-new entry to the cymbal market. Landing as a full-formed brand, Vulcan has already acquired Brit sticksmen Rob Brian and Mel Gaynor as endorsees and is distributed in Britain by PMT, a retail chain with stores dotted around the UK. Vulcan boasts no fewer than twelve distinctive cymbal ranges. This selection sent to Rhythm is from the company's Dark Master Series.

Vulcan (the god of fire and metalworking in Roman mythology, usually depicted wielding a blacksmith's hammer) was founded by Italian cymbalsmith Massimiliano Arrigoni. Max's family business is a long-established instrument manufacturer and distributor in Italy. For over a decade Max was closely involved with Bosphorus cymbals as a distributor and agent. During this time he gained experience in traditional Turkish cymbal production methods and also worked with chemical engineering companies to understand the subtle differences in bronze alloys. Most notably, he consulted with Antonio Di Lorenzo, a close associate of the legendary Roberto Spizzichino, considered by many to be the world's finest cymbalsmith until his death in 2011.

This detail-deep background and extensive planning explains how Vulcan Cymbals has emerged with a comprehensive set of ranges rather than building from small beginnings. It also gives an insight into the distinctive Italian/Turkish axis at the heart of the company's products: the cymbals are conceived and developed by Massimiliano in Italy while production models emerge from a factory in Turkey. This cross-border birthing is further alluded to in the legend stamped onto each cymbal above the Vulcan

1. Dual national Vulcan cymbals are unique in being designed in Italy and then manufactured in Turkey.

2. Diverse dozen Dark Master is one of twelve different cymbal ranges offered by Vulcan.

3. Unique recipe Vulcan has developed its own distinctive bronze alloys.

4. Dark secret The black 'coating' is a special chemical process which helps imbue the cymbals with their tonal qualities.

5. Hand to hand These sort of hammering patterns are not the work of machines.

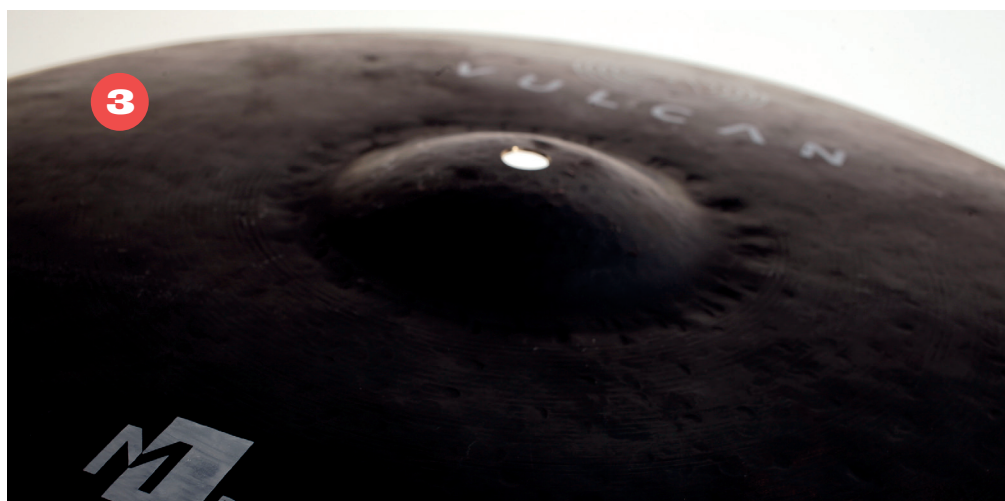
6. Tailor-made Other diameters are available and custom orders can be turned around in six to eight weeks.

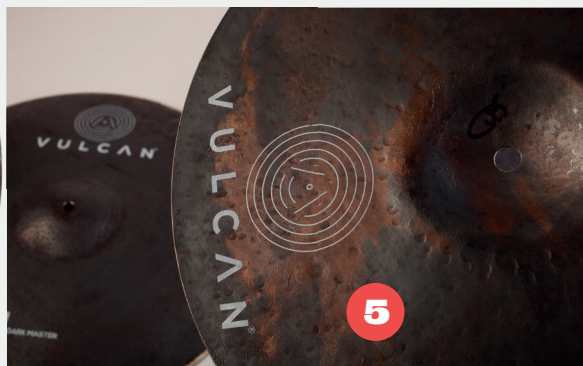
logo: "Designed in Italy / Made in Turkey".

Vulcan describes Dark Master cymbals as being "born for jazz but great for every style". Heavily hammered, light for their diameters and rocking a distinctively black look, first impressions would certainly point in a more niche direction. Each cymbal is individually cast from a secret B20 bronze formula (all Vulcan will reveal is that it is a "slight variance" to the standard B20 recipe) and then hand worked. Plentiful hammer marks cover the entire surface of each cymbal, with specific areas bearing clusters of particularly deep craters. The black coating which extends to a few millimetres from the edge is not a coating at all, but a proprietary chemical process – the details of which Vulcan is understandably reluctant to reveal. Vulcan also claims that light lathing has been undertaken as well, but it's hard to

discern beneath the combination of blackness and hammering. Each cymbal has its weight in grams and the cymbalsmith's initials added in permanent ink beneath the bell.

On review are a pair of 14" hi-hats, 16" and 18" crashes and a 22" ride. The 14" hats are paired in good proportions at 873g on top and 1035g below. They're deliciously warm with a gentle but crisp top end partnered by a rich and organic body. Some





sparsely lathed cymbals can sound a little one dimensional but the depth of note found in these hats can be measured in fathoms. All of the available frequencies seem to be represented equally, making the hats a joy to play into – they’re sniper-accurate at low dynamics, yet when the sticks are raining down in anger the underlying mellowness still carries through. Loosening off the pedal releases an irresistible sloshiness to further colour the sound while stepping results in a dryish, almost respectful *chick*.

The two crashes weigh in at 935g and 1104g respectively. For these dimensions, that’s pretty skinny and both cymbals flex willingly in the hands. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they both open quickly when asked. A similar blend of assertive high frequencies leads the way, closely followed by a more substantial main note that enables them to cut through quite assertively without sounding thin or brash. The

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16" model balances the opening toppiness with equal amounts of warmth and darkness that then resolves into a sweet decay. There is just enough complexity present to embellish the sound without impinging on the harmonious whole. If the 16" is relatively deeply-voiced for its waistline, the 18" possesses a near-perfect combination of pitch, darkness and depth, all spiced with delicate trashiness. The stick sound – a clearly enunciated *tah* – is also genuinely useable, making it good for low volume riding duties.

The 22" ride (2120g) lends these same tonal qualities to its larger diameter but behaves more like a crash/ride. While the stick sound is warm and clear, the level of wash that is generated at anything above low to medium dynamics soon rises from the background to be something of a distraction. Some judiciously applied tape would be enough to rein in its enthusiasm as it’s a great sounding cymbal, just a little eager to show off its qualities all at once. By the same token, it could be used as a fabulously endowed crash. **R**

CONTACT

www.vulcancymbals.com/en/
www.pmtonline.co.uk

Verdict

On this evidence, there is now a serious new contender amongst the established cymbal brands. These cymbals are as good – if not better in some aspects – than anything else out there and are keenly priced; check them out.

Rhythm Rating

8/10