



Sleishman

Omega Drum Set

By Brad Schlueter

Unless you live in Australia, you may not be familiar with Sleishman Drums, but the company has been making drums and pedals for our Down Under brethren for 30 years. Don Sleishman (pronounced “sleesh-man”) began as a popular drummer in Sydney who became known for his ability to repair and improve the sound of other professional drummer’s kits. He began spending more time in the shop than on stage, and eventually moved into manufacturing unique drums and hardware of his own design.

Sleishman is a remarkably innovative company and isn’t content to simply follow in the footsteps of its competitors. If you’ve had the pleasure of seeing Wil Calhoun play the unusual Sleishman double bass drum pedals, you’ve had a glimpse of

its revolutionary designs.

Sleishman’s new Omega series drums share many of the unique features of its high-end custom drums, but without the full custom price tag that might scare away those with shallower pockets. This is Sleishman’s push into the North American consumer market. And its prospects are looking good.

THE FREE-FLOATING DISTINCTION

The main difference you’re first likely to notice on a Sleishman kit is its unique free-floating shell system. Like a Pearl free-floating snare or a marching snare, there is no hardware drilled into the shell. Seems like a good idea, right? Without hardware screwed into the shell, the drum should vibrate to its fullest and produce more tone than one strapped with embedded metal.

Think of how many drum companies advertise low-mass lugs, suspension rings, etc. The Sleishman system goes a step further and uses a patented system on every drum that completely removes any resonance-robbing hardware that could mute the shell’s tone.

This is accomplished by using a suspension ring at the bottom of the drum that connects the top and bottom tensioning systems. It looks a bit like a R.I.M.S. Mount attached to the bottom of a drum, but goes all the way around the circumference of the shell. The bottom-head tension screws thread into receivers contained in this ring, while the top screws thread directly into long rods, which resemble a long tube lug. Since this is a free-floating system, tightening the top head also tightens the bottom head, giving each head exactly the same tension. This creates a drum with a very clear pitch and a lot of sustain. It’s also useful for those drummers among us who are too lazy to tune their bottom heads — you know who you are.

This suspension ring is also

used for attaching the snare strainer and butt plate, mounted tom brackets, floor tom legs, and even the bass drum spurs. The three vent holes are discreetly hidden behind the ring, and even the company’s badge is affixed to it, rather than on the shell where its minute presence could theoretically dampen the tone. Sleishman didn’t miss a trick, did it?

SHELLS

The shells are 100 percent North American maple with 6-ply tom and 10-ply snare shells and a 6-ply bass drum shell that employs 4-ply reinforcing rings for added strength and that are slightly undersized to fit into their tuning system. Sleishman chose maple for its full tone and low end. The tom shells seem very thin for 6-ply shells (about 0.125”), which I often prefer both for a fuller low end and lighter weight.

The Omega series is available in two configurations: A rock setup that I reviewed with two mounted toms, a 16” floor tom, and a 22” bass drum; and a funk/fusion kit with a smaller 20” kick and 14” floor tom. The drums are available as a shell pack or with Sleishman’s pro hardware.

FINISH & TRIM

The kit I reviewed had a high-gloss Ebony Fade finish, which is

DETAILS

SHELLS 100-percent North American maple, 6-ply toms, 6-ply bass drum with 4-ply reinforcing rings and 10-ply snare drum.

CONFIGURATION 10” x 8”, 12” x 9” mounted toms, 16” x 14” floor tom, a 22” x 18” bass drum and a 14” x 6.5”

FINISHES High-gloss lacquer in Ebony Fade (reviewed), Cherry, Ocean, Forest, and Tobacco.

FEATURES Free-floating design; thin, lightweight interchangeable shells; spring-loaded floor tom feet; very reasonable cost.

LIST PRICE Kit with bass drum mount: \$2,999

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a black-to-natural fade. The gloss was nice and smooth and the finish was very appealing. My 10" tom had a marginally thicker ebony band than the 12" tom, which I found a bit odd. I thought they should be the same thickness, or perhaps swapped the other way.

The drums all have triple-flanged hoops and the snare and bass drum use ten screws per head for precise fine-tuning. The snare strainer is a pretty simple design and was smooth enough to allow me to fine-tune the wire tension with the wires engaged. The snare also uses about the most minimalist butt plate I've seen. This is necessary since it conforms to the gentle curve of the suspension band to which it's attached, but I wish it could be more conveniently adjusted with a drum key rather than requiring a Phillips screwdriver.

To bring out a little extra sustain, the floor tom legs have "Reso Springs" that help maximize tone. The foldout bass drum spurs feature retractable spikes or rubber tips to accommodate whatever flooring you're playing on. The bass drum claws are unusual in that they are screwed into the outer edge of the bass drum hoops with Phillips screws. That's a necessity to make head changes easier with this completely free-floating design. As it is, changing heads takes a little longer with this system since you'll want to make sure tension rods remain straight, but that time is easily made up at the tuning stage.

The drums came equipped with Remo UT heads across the kit and had clear Pin-stripes on tom batters with clear Ambassadors underneath, a coated Ambassador head for snare batter, clear Powerstroke 4 bass drum batter, and solid black Powerstroke 4 logo head.

SOUND

Frankly, the drums sounded killer, even with the second-tier UT heads. When I first tried them, they were a bit detuned and a bit dead sounding. Once I brought up the head tension a little the drums really sang. Tuning the drums is easy, and since you're really only adjusting one head, it should take you only half as long!


The toms had clearly defined pitches with ample but not excessive sustain and a really fat tone. I really dug them and they made me appreciate that Pinstripe sound all over again. I tend to think of Pinstripes as slightly dead heads, but they didn't sound that way on this kit. They had that great stick attack and low end you'd expect, plus just the right amount of sustain. The 16" floor tom had a deep tone that would be a joy to ride for rock songs. They'd record wonderfully.

The bass drum had a nice deep and rich

tone that sounded fatter than I expected. It sounded good behind the kit but truly massive in front of it when a friend played the drum so I could hear it from the audience's perspective. The Powerstroke 4 heads have an internal muffling ring that dampened the head just enough. Since the resonant head wasn't ported, gigging drummers may wish to cut a port into it to accommodate a microphone. I'd rather port the head and reinforce it with a Holz ring than step in front of a malcontented soundman that's approaching my bass drum brandishing a box cutter.

The snare was also a winner. The drum was crisp, bright, and lively. It was crisp enough for busy playing and sensitive enough to capture my ghost notes. Rim-clicks were clear and loud and rimshots sang out loud and proud. Dropping the wires gave me a very decent timbale impersonation for reggae tunes. It's 6.5" depth helped it produce the volume you'll need when playing acoustically while adding some extra fullness to each note. One completely unique thing about these drums is you could buy one of Sleishman's high-end exotic snare shells (jarrah wood) and swap it for the stock shell using the same hardware system. This won't work with your own shells, since the Sleishman shells are slightly undersized to fit within the proprietary tensioning system.

WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?

Not much, but there are a couple of things you should be made aware of. Because the drums use long rods to receive the batter head's tension screws, I'd invest in hard cases rather than soft bags to avoid potential damage to the screws or suspension bands should a drum be tragically dropped. If you've always tuned one head lower than the other, this design prevents this, since both heads are tensioned together. However, since the drums sound great, there's really no need to do that. 

VERDICT

You won't have to travel overseas to get in on the unique high-end drums that Australian drummers have prized for so long. The thin maple shells and unique free-floating design have merged to create a superb-sounding kit that North American drummers can finally have at a surprisingly reasonable cost.



WHAT IS THIS?

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