

STORMY SOUNDS FOR AGGRESSIVE ACCENTS

TRX

Thunder & Lightning Cymbals

By John Nyman

You knew from the photos that these are not going to be “normal” cymbals, right? All those holes in so many cymbals — they just don’t convey a message of *ding-ding-a-ding* and *crash, crash, crash*, do they? You are correct, sir. You are wise to be intrigued, ma’am. New and peculiar from TRX, these are Thunder and Lightning.

TRX’s DRK Thunder and BRT Lightning crashes, splashes, and China-types, as well as a pair of matched Storm hi-hats, to be precise. Still young and bold, TRX distributes Turkish-made cymbals, and is building a strong reputation for good sounds at a good price. This batch likely includes one or two you will want to have.

SORT OUT YOUR SPECIALTIES

DRK Thunder cymbals are the milk chocolate ones. They have a drier, darker tone. Each has a raw-looking face that is heavily hammered all the way up to the base of the raw bell. There’s no fine lathing, though it seems that some type of brutal landscaping has taken place in a circular direction. However, the bottoms of DRK Thunder cymbals look quite conventional, with fine lathing cutting grooves concentrically on the brass-colored discs. And then there are the holes, so many holes. The 18” DRK Thunder has six large, six medium-sized, and six small-sized holes punched or drilled right through it.

The TRX BRT Lightning cymbals are the bright, shiny ones in both tone and appearance. Burnished to a gleaming glow both top and bottom, the Lightning cymbals are dimpled with small hammer marks that are both generous and polished out. The otherwise raw bell is also polished to mirror brightness. And again there are the holes — many, many holes. Both the BRT and DRK design elements remain consistent across their respective models, with changes only in size and profile.

MEET THE BARKERS

Our review shipment included both DRK and BRT 18” China-type cymbals, 18” and 20” DRK Thunder crash cymbals, a 16” BRT Lightning crash cymbal, 10” DRK and 10” BRT splash cymbals, and a pair of 14” BRT/DRK Storm Hi-Hats, which is where our test begins.

TEMPEST IN A HI-HAT

Do you play metal? Yes? Then you should check these out. The pairing of Thunder and Lightning cymbals produces an extremely aggressive, dry, intrusive hi-hat sound. They may not work as your everyday hi-hats, but shine as auxiliary hats. Played slightly loose in the stand, the brittle, metal-crashing tone is an open invitation for pumping double bass underneath.

They remind me of ribbon crashers, or maybe oversized steel sheets struck with metal beaters — and yet all this fury is con-

tained in the familiar 14” disc size and maintains a usable, musical tone. You can open and close and otherwise manipulate them as you would regular hi-hats. You can play them with the tip or the shoulder of your sticks. You can play on the face or on the edge of the cymbal and get musical changes in sound.

It doesn’t matter much which cymbal is on top, by the way. I tried both and found the combinations to remain strikingly similar. TRX Storm hi-hats would work in many rock applications and in modern, experimental settings, too. They are very aggressive, and different enough to be noticed in extreme volume situations.

THUNDER & LIGHTNING CHINESE STYLE

The Chinese style tastes like Chinese style. Both the 18” DRK and 18” BRT Chinas share that familiar China cymbal profile, which shouldn’t suggest they don’t have their own unique voice. But their voice isn’t as far removed from “regular” China cymbals as TRX Thunder and Lightning crashes are from “regular” crashes. Still, both Thunder and Lightning Chinas are quite good.

The 18” BRT Lightning China-style — holes and all — produces generous “gong-like” wash, and a rounded, punchy attack. You could almost ride on this thing, at the risk of falling through all those holes! The 18” DRK Thunder



UNDER THE STORM The underside of Thunder cymbals are more conventional than the playing side, with fine lathe grooves and a traditional finish.

China is drier than its BRT counterpart, and a bit more forceful. Tapping the face of the DRK emits a sound like tapping, say, the walls of a huge metal barrel, while tapping the face of the BRT is more like tapping a small gong. Both are potential winners, but again, the field of China-type cymbals is so vast you’ll be best served by comparing them yourself.

THUNDER & LIGHTNING CRASHES SPLASH IN THE SKY

Thunder and Lightning starts small and distant, right? Okay, here are the 10” BRT Lightning and the 10” DRK Thunder cymbals. Their similarities and differences make them work marvelously as a pair, so it wouldn’t hurt to get both of them. The BRT Lightning

18" Thunder China cymbal — \$550.

Thunder cymbals have a heavily-hammered, unlathed playing area.

Lightning cymbals have a bright, unlathed finish with small hammer marks.

18" Lightning China cymbal — \$550.

A hole.



Thunder cymbal bells look raw and unfinished.

Lightning cymbal bells are polished to a mirror finish.

10" Thunder splash — \$275.

Another hole.

10" Lightning splash — \$275.

14" Storm hi-hats combine one Thunder and one Lightning cymbal — \$650.

NOT PICTURED ALL PRICES ARE MSRP.

16" Lightning Crash — \$450

18" Thunder crash — \$500

20" Thunder Crash — \$550.



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splash, shiny and holey, has a breathy attack and a musical pie-tin tone. It has a brightly toned entrance and a lower, longer decay. The holey and darkly mottled DRK Thunder splash has a full but rounded attack, a strong Asian gong tone, and a gong-like, whispering decay. These two are useful and interesting variations on the classic splash sound. I liked them very much.

BIGGER WEATHER

The effects of cymbal design and hole punching becomes more

evident when we turn to normal crash cymbal sizes. The 16" BRT Lightning crash, for example, starts as a heavy cymbal. It's quite thick. But with 18 holes in it, the mass changes radically. Response is quick, like a thinner cymbal, but the sound is very unusual. It sounds like a perfectly synced combination of a small crash, a very large cookie sheet, and a distant gong.

The 18" DRK Thunder crash cymbal offers a different, weird sound combination. To my ears it's like a mix of an empty,

metal trash can thrown against a warehouse door, a large cymbal heard through a vintage plate reverb unit, and a gong. I like it.

The 20" DRK Thunder crash really pushes the envelope of different, brutal weirdness. It has a barking attack, quite heavy with mid-range frequencies, and a strongly gong-like tone. Its tone is quite low for a cymbal, and displaces a lot of inner ear hair follicles with every hit. It's a dark, brooding, rasping animal of a cymbal, which makes the 16" sound wispy by comparison.

In fact, the two of them, 16" and 20", would make a great top and bottom end "last word" in your cymbal set.

VERDICT

TRX has boldly punched through the status quo in search of new sounds for you. Brash, raspy, and dry, these Thunder and Lightning cymbals are different enough to woo you or shoo you. They are worth a listen, especially if you need a noticeably aggressive cymbal for your music, whatever style that may be.