

TRX

X Series Cymbals

TEN YEARS
AFTER

By David E. Libman

TRX has taken a practical yet playful approach to naming its cymbal lines, choosing vaguely onomatopoeic acronyms like DRK (dark), BRT (bright), and MDM (can you guess what *that* stands for?) to christen its many models. So if at first glance the sci-fi connotations of its new X Series seem oddly out of place, consider that 2016 marks the company's tenth anniversary, and it all becomes clear.

A brand gets only one tenth anniversary in its lifetime, so we figured the X Series must be something special. We requested a set for an early review, and received a handful of X Series prototypes: a 22" thin ride; 20", 18", and 16" thin crashes; and 14" hi-hats.

SKINNY ON THE SPECS

Those readers who've followed trends in cymbal design over the past decade have witnessed the rush of companies mashing up orthodox and unorthodox manufacturing techniques onto single slabs of bronze. So it's no longer unusual to see a cymbal with both lathed and unlathed portions, varying striped patterns, crazy combinations of deep and shallow hammering, or even different hues of bronze shading. And you might as well toss a handful of 1" holes into the mix, since everybody jumped on that bandwagon, too. So when put into that context, the specifications of TRX's X Series are remarkably basic, and yet also stand out in today's market due to their sheer conventionalism.

In particular, the X Series consists of thin (and we do mean *skinny!*), traditionally lathed cymbals that are hand-hammered

and shaped from B20 Turkish bronze. TRX decorated the prototypes I received with its combination moon and star "TRX" black logos on the playing surfaces. Cymbal bottoms wore the same black logos, plus additional black text indicating diameter and cymbal type (for example, "Hi-Hat Top"). The hammer marks populating all X Series cymbals are moderate indentations, and include a combination of medium marks contrasted by less populous deeper hammering. Traditional lathing completes the look for a simple, yet classy aesthetic.

But why reserve simplicity for just design and look? Why not extend simplicity to pricing as well? And TRX did just that. All of TRX's cymbal series have simple pricing so that cymbals of the same diameter all cost the same amount. MAP equals 60 percent of the list price. For example, the 22" X Series ride retails for \$600 and sells for a \$360 MAP. That same 22" ride pricing of \$600/\$360 also applies to TRX's Blends, NRG, BRT, ALT, MDM, and DRK Series.

FLEX & WASH

Unsurprisingly, when you hand-hammer B20 bronze and lathe it into a thin cymbal, the instrument born from that process plays with a lot of give. As a drummer who is gracefully aging into his midforties, I particularly appreciated the flexible, forgiving response my hands felt when I played the X Series with sticks. Even played with brushes, these cymbals ripple at their ends and have a pillow-like feel.

Sonically, the 22" ride sang with breathiness and sustain, alongside lots of midrange

frequencies and ample lows to fill out the sound. It's not a glassy or pingy ride, but does have sufficient articulation to convey patterns clearly without washing out. It also has a lushness and expressiveness that lends itself to sensitive playing. Because of its thin profile, this ride doubled well as a large crash cymbal. Its bell incorporated the sound of the rest of the ride, but was sufficiently distinct to offer a good bell tone.

Given their lack of girth, the 20", 18", and 16" crashes exploded quickly, even when played with minimal effort. It was easy to run the gamut of dynamics from pianissimo through forte with these crashes, though they start to wash out at fortissimo (which for me is when I start having to play strokes with significant elbow movement to be loud enough). So if fortissimo is your dynamic range, you'll probably want to mike X Series crashes, or use thicker crashes.

Wash predominates over clang with X Series crashes. The 16" model produces a range of lows and a fullness I'd usually expect from a slightly larger 17" or 18" crash. As I crashed the 18" and 20" models harder and louder, they began to take on hints of China-type trashiness. If you're looking for a pristine, glassy crash, look elsewhere. X Series crashes hit their sweet spot in the more washy, trashy realm. And don't expect them to pull double duty as rides. All three are tried-and-true crashes, not crash/ride combos.


Our 14" X Series hi-hats didn't have a wavy bottom, rivets, air holes, or any other fancy treatment. Yet they responded to the depression of my foot with one of the most satisfying *chick* sounds

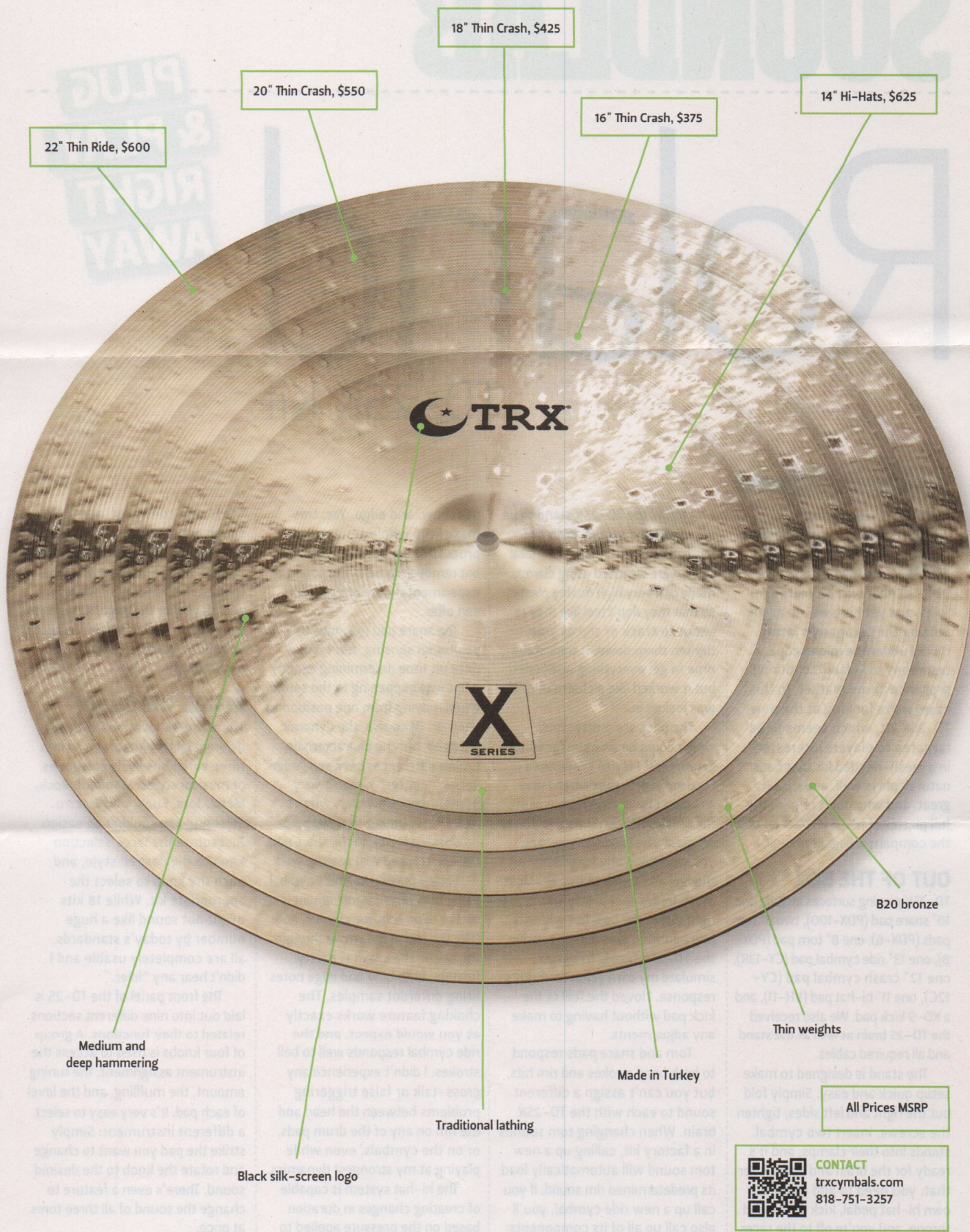
I've experienced in a while. Foot splashes were equally impressive. They responded to sticks with just the right blend of mids, highs, sizzle, and articulation. Overall, I found the hi-hats to be a particularly impressive member of the X Series family.

RATING X

In the short time I had the X Series prototypes, I took them to two gigs. They worked perfectly at an acoustic jazz gig because of the beautiful lushness of the ride cymbal, the pronounced *chick* from the hi-hats, and washy, slightly trashy qualities of the crashes. I also immensely enjoyed playing the X Series with a more amplified fusion trio, but occasionally longed for the more pronounced, pingy, or clangy qualities that come from a slightly thicker crash cymbal. Perhaps it goes without saying that the X Series functions best in musical genres that lend themselves to the use of thin cymbals.

VERDICT

It's refreshing to see TRX celebrate its tenth anniversary with a set of thin cymbals that avoid gimmicky "flavor of the month" manufacturing techniques in favor of a simple, back-to-basics approach. The look of the X Series reminded me of what most cymbals looked like 30 years ago. Their feel was comfortable and expressive, and their sounds were musical and dynamic with some quirky personality sprinkled in (especially the crash cymbals). If the X Series is an indication of what TRX has to offer on its tenth anniversary, I can't wait to see what the company offers on its twentieth. I sense an XX review may be on the horizon. 



18" Thin Crash, \$425

20" Thin Crash, \$550

22" Thin Ride, \$600

16" Thin Crash, \$375

14" Hi-Hats, \$625

TRX

X
SERIES

B20 bronze

Thin weights

Made in Turkey

Traditional lathing

Medium and
deep hammering

Black silk-screen logo

All Prices MSRP



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