

Bosphorus

Ignacio Berroa Versa Series

by Michael Dawson



THE NUMBERS

20" Versa Ride: \$500
20" Versa Flat Ride: \$500
18" Versa Crash: \$440
14" Versa Hi-Hats: \$520
www.bosphoruscymbals.com

Bosphorus is renowned for making some of the finest hand-hammered cymbals in the world. Their catalog includes everything from the dry and exotic Turks, to the bright and crisp Gold series, to signature designs for some of today's most discerning jazz, funk, and rock drummers.

The Versa series was developed in collaboration with legendary Latin-jazz artist Ignacio Berroa. As the name indicates, this set of cymbals (20" ride, 20" flat ride, 18" crash, and 14" hi-hats) is designed to handle a wide range of styles, from acoustic jazz, to fiery Salsa, to rock and funk. Let's see how they do.

20" Versa Ride

The 20" Versa ride is a cool-looking cymbal that's only lathed from the middle of the bow to the edge. The rest of the surface is completely raw and uncut. While it's questionable whether or not playing between the two sections has any more of an effect on the sound than what you could achieve on a standard-lathed ride, I did appreciate the added visual appeal. Plus, I found that the perfect playing spot was at the point where the lathed and unlathed sections met. So if nothing else, the lathing pattern provides an excellent target.

The Versa ride proved to be the most all-purpose cymbal in the series. The bell has a very musical yet cutting tone, while the main ride sound has a great balance of pingy attack and smooth, warm undertones. For years, I relied on a 20" Zildjian K Custom Medium as my "go-to" ride for jazz, funk, rock, and big band gigs. The overall sound of the Versa ride reminded me of my K Custom Medium; it's just a little brighter with a more balanced spread.

20" Flat Ride

Flat rides have been some of my favorite cymbals ever since my high school drumset teacher put up his cherished Paiste 602 flat ride and had me play along with Roy Haynes on Chick Corea's *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*. (Roy used the same cymbal on the record.) The Versa Flat ride has a lot of the qualities that I loved about the Paiste, including a strong "woody" stick sound and a shimmering, controlled wash.

What makes this ride different from other no-bell models is that it's heavier. As a result, the pitch is higher, the timbre is brighter, and there isn't any flange-like spray to the overtones (although I did notice considerable mid-range build-up when I played the cymbal at higher volumes). This ride sounds very clean and articulate, regardless of where you strike it. If you want more complexity, you might want to add a couple rivets. Ignacio added some to his.

18" Crash

This crash is *super* fast. Even the lightest touch with a brush or dowel rod caused the cymbal to open up with a dark and somewhat trashy voice. It also decays right away. So even if you lay into it to add an exclamation point to the end of a solo section, you don't have to worry about the after-ring lingering through the next two choruses. This cymbal is also very effective for low-volume gigs where you want to play full-sounding crashes without

The Versa Crash and Flat Ride feature a shiny brilliant finish, while the ride and hi-hats (not shown) are only lathed on the outer perimeter.



having to hit too hard.

I had a lot of fun using this cymbal off to the right side of the ride, where I could drop in syncopated Jeff "Tain" Watts-type crash accents with just a quick flick of the wrist. This cymbal would also work well for timbale players who need a cutting crash that also has a throaty bell sound. Hip-hop/R&B drummers might also like this cymbal for its China-like explosiveness.

14" Hi-Hats

The 14" Versa hi-hats have the same half-lathing pattern as the ride. They also share similar sonic characteristics. The overall pitch is fairly low, but still within the "all-purpose" range they're designed for. Closed stick sounds are dry and woody, while partially open strokes give off a raspy hiss. The foot "chick" also has a lot of bite. Some of us at *MD* felt that overall these hats were a little too "chunky"

sounding, which could turn away those of you looking for a cushy Papa Jo Jones-type feel. However, these hats do provide a dark jazz flavor that can cut through on louder gigs.

Lasting Effects

Although it might be a bit of a stretch to say that the Versa flat ride and crash would withstand the heavy punishment of some of today's more extreme musical styles, there are a lot of situations in which this series would really shine. So if you find yourself jumping from straight-ahead jazz sessions to salsa parties to big band shuffles—with an occasional funk or light rock gig thrown in—you might find the sounds you need in these all-purpose plates. Plus, if they're good enough for someone as well-rounded as Ignacio...

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