



Zultan Raw SlapClap

If you're happy and you know it, Zultan is offering a cut-price solution to clapping your hands

BY STUART WILLIAMS

▶ **FAR FROM THE** times of yore - where effects cymbals were limited to chinas and variations on splashes - the third decade of this century offers up a banquet of bronze options, allowing us to expand our palettes way beyond 'chick', 'ping' or 'crash'. One of the most recent arrivals is a group of effects cymbals aimed at emulating the sound of a processed handclap.

Yes, you read that right: we've gone full-circle from organic, human flesh and bone, to sampled and synthesized electronic recreations, all the way to forged metal that, when struck, creates a copy of a copy of one of the most primitive of percussion noises. Very meta indeed...

Zultan's Raw series SlapClap finds its niche right here, but, innovative as it might sound, it's not the first of its kind. Istanbul Agop's ClapStack, unveiled in 2018, was designed in collaboration with session drummer, Trevor Lawrence Jr (Stevie Wonder, Macy Gray, Dr Dre, Herbie Hancock).

The basic principle being a stack-type trio of thin cymbals, pressed together tightly and held under tension from your cymbal stand's wingnut. When struck, the burst of trashy, muted white noise combines just enough to fool an audience into thinking they're hearing the intro to Carwash, and you haven't had to so much as look at a drum pad or jack cable.

Ah, yes: electronics. Why, in an age where we can 'de-mix' music, download free samples from any number of online resources, or simply ask AI to create the perfect clap sound for us, would one employ a cymbal to emulate one of the most fundamental sounds in popular music? Well, why not?

But being objective, there are a few reasons. Some drummers neither have, nor want to use a dedicated sample pad. Or, maybe you'd prefer to use your electronics for running clicks, tracks and loops rather than playable percussion.

Finally, setting up a cymbal requires less effort and fewer engineering issues than incorporating electronics - as an acoustic source, it'll blend more cohesively with the rest of your kit, and, just like a cowbell, you will always have it there as a playable sound within your kit, regardless of which patch your pad is set to.

Zultan's SlapClap takes a similar approach to offerings such as the Istanbul Clap Stack, Meinl Byzance Smack Stack and Sabian's XSR Effeks Clap. It's made up of three B20 bronze cymbals (12", 14" and 16"), cast, and left un-lathed, with a particular 'blank' visual quality that screams 'trashy' before you even play a note.

They're stacked largest to smallest, creating a side profile not unlike a horse saddle. As already



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mentioned, once they're mounted on the stand (as you're probably used to from other stack cymbals), they can be controlled by wingnut tension - looser for a bit more slosh, tighter for a crisper, more staccato sound.

Performance

Now, we were lucky enough to attend the NAMM Show when Istanbul Agop released the first Clap Stack, and, even through the noise of a crowded drum hall, the effect is as surreal as it is impressive. Despite this, it's a similar experience when trying the Zultan SlapClap for the first time - sort of like seeing a voice actor perform as your favourite cartoon character: it's confusing, slightly disorientating, and a hell of a lot of fun.

Next, the budget chain of rehearsal studios we were initially trying the SlapClap in revealed one of the few flaws of this design: the stands in this particular establishment were fitted with No Nut sleeves. So, the only way of manually adjusting the cymbals' timbre was unavailable. Worth bearing in mind if your stands are equipped with the same, or you're regularly playing on house kits that have inevitably had bits of hardware lost or pillaged. The SlapClap still works in this setting, but the resulting sound is more like a longer, sloshier, more traditional stack sound, rather than the tight, crunchy and stylised hand clap we were hoping for.

Next up, we tried the Slap Clap at a couple of gigs. The first contained some modern EDM/pop tunes where a layered clap/snare combo was damn near obligatory, and it didn't disappoint. With experimentation at hand thanks to our complete cymbal stands, we were able to find a sweet spot at a medium tension, and as the kit was un-mic'd with no electronics to blend, we found it really easy to mix the SlapClap in by simply playing appropriately. For some sections, it works really well as the only accent on the backbeat, without the jarring drop or over-loud mis-match in volume when not being masked by the snare.

The second gig contained Kings of Leon's cover band staple Sex On Fire in the set. This time, our kit was mic'd, and as this was the only song where additional sounds were required, it didn't make sense to set up power, a line into the PA and monitoring for our Roland SPD-SX.



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The Zultan SlapClap puts one of the most contemporary effects cymbal types within easier reach. While it only comes in one configuration with no add-on options, variation can be achieved through tension adjustments, and it offers a very useful solution for clap emulation without needing to use electronics.

PROS

- + Affordable price point.
- + Convenient clap emulation.
- + Versatile application.

CONS

- You'll need to make sure you have tension nuts on your stands.
- Only available in one size.

SPECS

TYPE: Stacked 'clap' cymbal
MATERIAL: B20 bronze
FINISH: Raw
SIZE: 12", 14", 16"

So, after throwing it on a lightweight DW 6000 stand during a rushed setup, the crunchy processed clap sound from the verses of SoF were not only readily available, but the SlapClap did an almost uncanny job at emulating the sound to a tee.

Of course, it's not just for lazy covers band drummers wanting an extra layer on the backbeat. The SlapClap can function as an accent cymbal just like any other stack. Cranking the tension from its mid-point to right down takes it from a looser clap into gritty finger-snap territory, all attack followed by a short burst of noise before abruptly cutting. With the correct positioning within your kit, this could easily function as a psuedo-electronic hi-hat sound. It's this versatility that makes the SlapClap so much fun.

Verdict

At just over £200, the SlapClap comes in at around a third less than its equivalents from some of the bigger-name brands. Of course, if you're the type of purist who can't bear to mix and match brands, this is going to cause you something of a dilemma. That's because the Zultan SlapClap is one of those products that you're not entirely sure if or why you might need it. That is until you try it, and at that point, you'll either have to buy it and live with the discrepancy, or remain brand-loyal and spend more.

While it's easy to view this as a novelty, it's actually an incredibly useful, potentially time-saving and ultimately very fun addition. The fact that it is so heavily applicable to pretty much any style of music means that you'll end up using it a lot more than you might think, and at this price, any possible caution can be thrown more or less to the wind. Just don't forget your wing nut.