

AQUARIAN

Force Ten and Triple Threat Drumheads

by Michael Dawson

Aquarian is known for its ingenious yet practical drumheads for the working player, like the Super-Kick bass drum head with a floating felt muffling ring, the calf-like Vintage line, and the pre-dampened Studio-X series. The company recently released two thicker models designed to provide extra durability and powerful tones: the double-ply Force Ten tom head and the triple-ply Triple Threat snare batter. Let's take a look.

FORCE TEN

Force Ten tom heads, which are available as clear or coated models in 8" through 18" sizes, are molded with two plies of 10 mil film, making them the thickest 2-ply head in Aquarian's catalog. (For comparison, the company's Performance II and Response 2 double-ply heads are made with 7 mil film, while the Super-2 features a 7 mil/5 mil combination.) This extra thickness not only adds durability but also increases the attack and depth.

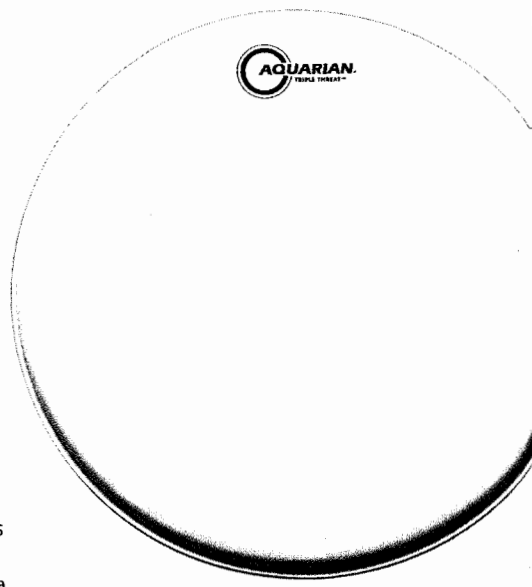
I tested the Force Ten heads on a set of thick acrylic drums (10", 12", 14", 16") and found that they tuned up very quickly and produced a rich, snappy, and punchy sound, especially under low tension. The floor toms took on a kick-like flavor when tuned half a turn above slack, while the rack toms had a creamier timbre with

clearly defined pitches and round sustain. The decay was relatively short on all the drums, and the overtones centered in the low and middle registers, so no muffling was needed to bring the sound into focus. The heads held up well after a few hours of heavy playing, detuning only a touch at the tension rods closest to me. If you like deep tom tones with strong attack and you have a tendency to blow through standard 2-ply heads rather quickly, the Force Ten could be a great choice.

TRIPLE THREAT

Three plies of 7 mil film make for a very durable drumhead. My concern with the Triple Threat snare batter was that the extra ply might make the drum sound a bit dull and feel somewhat flat. What I found, however, was that the Triple Threat offered an open sound close to that of a double-ply head, along with more low end. It was also responsive enough to provide decent rebound for double strokes and buzz rolls.

When tuned to a medium tension (85 on a DrumDial) on a 6 1/2"x14 brass snare, the head produced a meaty smack, followed by clear overtones that could be accentuated by playing off center or con-



trolled by striking the drum at dead center. I ended up adding a bit of muffling to tamp down the ring when recording, but these extra overtones could prove essential for cutting through on live gigs.

The Triple Threat also handled very low tunings quite well, so you can get a fat, pillowy sound easily by applying a bit more muffling (I taped a 1" square of tissue near the edge) and detuning the tension rods into floor-tom territory. The head seemed most comfortable in the low to medium range, but when tuned medium-tight on a 6x14 acrylic snare, it produced a thick, strong crack with controlled overtones that didn't require any muffling, live or in the studio.

If you're a heavy hitter who prefers the open sound and sensitive feel of single- or double-ply batters, but you can't use those types of heads because they wear out too quickly, you might want to give this one a try.

aquariandrumheads.com