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Pearl Signature Cowbells

From £24 | The insanely talented 'El Negro' augments his drumset with a variety of cowbells. **Charlie Price** checks out his new signature range.

Pearl's new range of Horacio Hernandez signature cowbells has been three years in the making. It is a comprehensive range, comprising a high-pitched cha-cha bell through to a deep and satisfying timbale bell. In between they offer a foot clave bell, a low-pitched cha-cha bell and a mambo bell. The five bells are finished in beautifully polished plated copper, and as they are all unique bells, they all have individual names.

Bella is the high-pitched cha-cha bell and is the smallest of the bells. It has a separate mounting that is joined to the bell via two rubber gaskets, producing a lovely clear tone. A patent pending two-position mounting bracket is used throughout the range, which allows close positioning of several bells on one post thanks to the staggering of the position of the wing nuts. They also have unique two-sided playing surfaces so you might find it much more comfortable to play the flat side when the bell's mouth is facing you (as when mounted) or the curved side when you

play it side-on as you would in a timbale set-up. ClaBell is the next size up and is Horacio's bell of choice for his left-foot clave patterns. Pitched about a 'third' along from Bella, it is specifically designed for foot clave playing, which requires mounting the bell on a cowbell bracket (such as Pearl's new PPS-20 bracket) and connecting a bass drum pedal to it so you can play the clave figures with your hi-hat foot. ClaBell sounds noticeably woodier than the rest and is a great middle ground between overly ringy bells and clave blocks, which are sometimes too staccato. It cuts through the music without being too dominant.

ChaBella is next in line and has an interval of about another third along from ClaBell. This is a low-pitched cha-cha bell with more sustain than most mass-produced bells. It's a bit like a great jazz ride cymbal that has just enough wash to connect the beats and create a sustained but controlled beat. I used ChaBella on some salsa gigs along with its larger sister MaryBell (Horacio's

timbale bell of choice) and I loved them to bits. The two bells are pitched so that they blend beautifully into each other, and bongo bell patterns played on MaryBell sounded sonorous and seemed to sit really well with the bongocero's bell patterns.

Last up is IsaBell, the mambo bell that Horacio deploys on the bass drum post. Although it is similar in size to MaryBell, it has a slightly more staccato tone and is slightly higher in pitch. I achieved great results with this one in the studio when recording an Afro 6/8 groove and playing an underlying four with ClaBell on the bracket. **R**

ESSENTIALS



PRICES

HH-1 Bella	£24
HH-2 ClaBell	£25
HH-3 ChaBella	£26
HH-4 IsaBell	£33
HH-5 MaryBell	£35
PPS-20 bracket	£32

CONTACT

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RHYTHM VERDICT

Horacio Hernandez has set new standards for Afro-Cuban and jazz drumming. He's astonished everyone with his versatility and jaw dropping command over anything that he adds to his set-up. Pearl has equipped 'El Negro' well over the years and must be proud of his association with the company. You may not want all your bells to be from the same range, but if you did go for all five bells then you would certainly have an extremely striking, musical and innovative set to choose from.

+ These cowbells are beautifully crafted and solidly made, and they look and sound like nothing else in this price range.

- Buy these and soon you'll want more percussion and probably a bigger house to fit it all in.

RATING

