By offering a variety of benefits for players at every level, electronic drumming is more than just another step in the evolution of drumming, it's an essential part of the modern drumset. It's rare, these days, to listen to a record or attend a concert where at least some form of electronic drums aren't being used— whether it's a preprogrammed drum machine pattern, a completely electronic drum track or hybrid acoustic-electronic drum sounds. In fact, the growing popularity of electronic drumming is based on the fact that they offer drummers many advantages in concert, recording and rehearsal situations, including:

• Silent practice and "plug-and-play" practice with CDs and DVDs.

• Programming and playing with loops and sequences.

• Creating, accessing, modifying and combining a wide range of high-quality drum, percussion and other sounds.

• Covering horn parts, bass lines, background vocals and percussion while sitting behind the drumset.

• Recreating studio sounds in live settings and interfacing electronic drums with computers at home and in the studio.

Just keep in mind that although they can be recorded directly from pads and sound modules in a recording studio, electronic drums produce no audible sound by themselves. Therefore, mixing the tone and volume levels, monitoring the sound onstage and amplifying the output through a PA system must be considered when using an electronic drum system in any live situation.

ELECTRONIC DRUM TERMINOLOGY

Controllers can be single or multi-zone drum pads (with sensors underneath a rubber playing surface or a conventional or mesh drumhead) or triggers that mount on acoustic drums. Striking the controller activates the sensor and sends an electronic signal to the sound module telling it to generate a sound.

Sound Modules use electronic circuits and components to synthesize sounds or playback digital samples (pre-recorded sounds). Sound modules are also called "brains" and may include other features such as programmability, memory, sampling or effects.

Programmable features of electronic drums range from simple control of pitch, volume and dynamic sensitivity to more complex parameters like note stacking, cross-fading of multiple sounds, creating sequences and loops and storing groups of sounds as "kits". An electronic drum sound can also be modified by using signal processors, filters and effects such as echo, delay, compression and flange. Most electronic drum "brains" include the ability to adjust the sounds and save the program information in the module's memory.

MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) is a digital language that electronics, computers and recording devices use to communicate with one another. MIDI is used to transfer both signal and program information on up to 16 channels that can easily link several controllers, sound modules and other devices to one another.
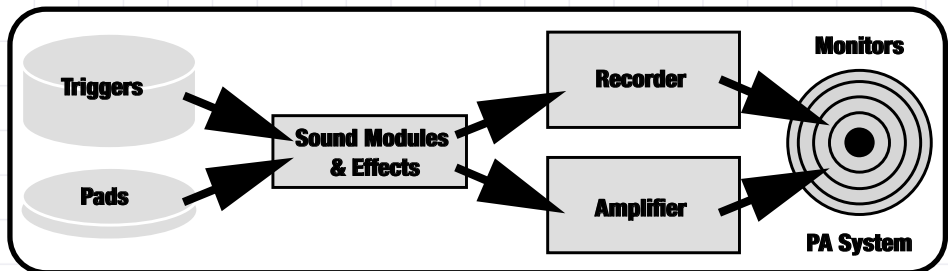
To learn more about electronic drumming, including how pro drummers use them, ask your dealer or log on to the drum-related websites listed throughout this guide.