

NEW GEAR

EXCLUSIVE

THE WAH WAH TUBES produce an eerie sound when hit with a rubber-tipped beater

MAKAH-BURL WOOD gives the Palito an interesting and attractive playing surface



ESSENTIAL SPEC



PRICES

Palito £84
Heated Tambourine (dual-alloy jingles) £34
Heated Tambourine (aluminium jingles) £51
Wah Wah Tubes £39-£45
Spark Shaker £17
Spin Spark Shaker £19
Wah Wah Shaker £12
UFO Shaker £8.50

SHELL MATERIAL

Palito: Rubber wood body with a makah-burl frontplate

FINISHES

Tambourines: lacquered natural wood

SUPPLIED HEADS

Tambourines: natural goat skin

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MEINL HAND PERCUSSION

From £8.50 Meinl is back with yet another innovative range of instruments, as Charlie Price discovers

Meinl might be better known for its genre-defying range of cymbals, but the German giant has designed and developed a staggering catalogue of hand percussion as well. Many of these products have won trade awards and the company's innovative approach has garnered an impressive artist endorsement roster. Meinl has not only produced a comprehensive set of mainstream percussion instruments, but has sought out new directions, resulting in some pretty interesting innovations. So what has it got to tempt us with this time?

Build

First up is the Palito, which is basically a scaled-down string cajon. While offering many of the features of Meinl's full-size models, it definitely isn't designed to be sat on. Measuring just 30cmx20cmx13cm, the Palito's body is constructed from Meinl's generic rubber wood with an exotic and attractive makah-burl tapa (playing surface). The side opposite the tapa has four rubber

feet, so you can even play the instrument on a tabletop. Even better, two steel guitar strings lie against the inside of the tapa, giving your strokes a subtle snap.

Following the Palito, Meinl's professional series 10"-headed tambourines are offered in various depths. They both feature a beautifully responsive fixed goat-skin head and a choice of various different jingle sets.

Next in line are the ghostly Wah Wah tubes. These surprisingly weighty steel tubes are sealed with a plastic plug at one end and are easy to play by striking the other end with the rubber-tipped beater provided.

Developed exclusively for Meinl by percussion artist Bill Saragosa, the Spark shakers consist of perforated black metal casings containing fairly substantial shot. They're easy to cup and can produce many tones and effects as a result. A variation on this model - the Spin Spark shaker - features a regular Spark shaker joined to a circular metal base that radically changes the pitch.

The third shaker on offer, Meinl's innovative Wah Wah, is small enough to be cupped in the

hand, made of wood and constructed with two chambers joined by a plastic membrane.

Finally, we have the curiously titled UFO shaker - so called because of its ergonomic shape. It's an effortlessly playable instrument, whether held in the palm or by its edges. Made from black plastic, extremely light and with a featherweight filling, this would be a great choice for subtle live usage but is perfect for the studio.

Hands on

After playing full-size cajons, you may wonder what the diminutive Palito can offer, but if you think more bongo-like you'll be in the right ballpark. The Palito possesses reasonable bass tone in the middle of the tapa, with mids and slaps responsive and controllable if you fine-tune the screws on the top. This means you can achieve more or less snap to the sound of the strokes.

The single row of dual-alloy jingle sets on the Super Natural tambourine produce a noticeably louder and higher pitch than that created by the deeper-shelled, double-row African Brown model, which is equipped with lighter aluminium jingles.

The Wah Wah tubes sound great when struck unimpeded, but by covering and



A RUBBER GRIP
makes the tambourines
reassuring to hold and play



As far as shakers go, Meinl's UFO is the star, with a bigger sound than standard eggs but the same controllability

uncovering the sound hole with your thumb you can produce the amusing 'wah' effect.

The regular Spark shakers' dark, crunchy sounds when closed (cupped with the palm) and bright, singing tones when played open-handed make them a pleasure to play.

The Wah Wah shaker possesses a subtle, low-volume tone and a mutable sound hole to control its subtle 'wah-ish' sounds. Try holding the Wah Wah in different positions as you shake it to discover new tones and levels of wah. The sound of Meinl's UFO Shaker, meanwhile, resembles one of those ubiquitous egg shakers, but is much more controllable, louder and more pleasing to the ear.

Verdict

When the Palito is miked properly from the tapa/sound-hole vicinity, you'll be surprised with the results. It's an affordable, portable way of getting into the world of the box drum.

The tambourines have rubber grips on both sides, which makes playing much more reassuring. If we had to choose a favourite, though, it would definitely be the deeper African Brown model with aluminium jingles.

Long sustain and tactile performance make the Wah Wah tubes an interesting addition to your percussive trick bag, while both the

Spark shakers are highly tactile and don't feel like they'll fly from your grip.

The Wah Wah shaker may not be everyone's cup of tea, but it's always good to have some different sound options and this affordable little guy might be just the ticket.

As far as shakers go though, Meinl's UFO is the star, with a bigger sound than standard eggs, but the same controllability and a comfortable design. One for your stick bag, whether you're a drummer or percussionist. **R**

Rating **★★★★☆**

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