

# Meinl Samba Series

**From £11** | A very different but effective line of Brazilian samba instruments. **Charlie Price** joins the parade.

## ESSENTIALS



## PRICES

### Samba Series

Surdo **£163-£193**

Surdo beater **£9-£15**

Samba belt **£24**

Tambourims **£23-£39**

Handheld cowbells **£24-£27**

Small mounted a-go-go bell **£39**

Large handheld a-go-go bell **£47**

Aluminium repinique **£82-£99**

Wood repinique **£99**

Rubberwood pandeiros **£68-£75**

Aluminium shakers **£10-£36**

Meinl's Samba Series seeks to create a range of lightweight instruments that provide authentic Brazilian sounds while causing minimal discomfort to the player.

Surdos provide the heartbeat to a samba group and Meinl's Samba Series surdos are made from premium aluminium and come in three sizes, all featuring countersunk bolt heads and chrome plated hardware. The review model is 18"x22" with eight lugs and is powerful and articulate with beautifully controlled bass tones. I would like to hear the 10-lug 20"x24" and 22"x24" models alongside the 18" in a group setting.

Meinl also offer stand-alone surdos (basically surdos on floor-tom style legs), which would suit percussion groups and any band that doesn't need to travel while playing (as in a parade setting), as well as a high quality samba belt that features an adjustable shoulder pad and is fully length adjustable with strong attachment clips. It looks striking, is fully functional and really comfortable.

The 6" high-pitched tambourims come together in a samba band to add a chattering excitement to the group and create a lot of forward motion. Meinl use a variety of materials for their tambourims including ABS plastic, aluminium, chrome-plated steel and

rubberwood, with a patented Floatune tuning system.

They come in ABS and brass and are poles apart sonically; the ABS is more muted and the brass sings out beautifully. Playing them with the usual plastic three-pronged stick accentuates their high pitch and Meinl includes a German pfennig for use as your tuning key – an ingenious use of the now-defunct currency! Like the majority of the Samba Series the tambourims feature countersunk bolt heads and, as in the case of the repiniques, they have synthetic heads with logos applied underneath.

## Wood vs metal

Meinl offer a 10"x10" six-lug and a 12"x12" eight-lug aluminium repinique. Extremely lightweight and with a traditional street look, the repiniques feature countersunk bolt heads and chrome plated hardware. These drums have a cutting and considerably ringing tone compared to their wood counterpart. Muting these drums is easy and the synthetic heads are fairly durable too.

## KEY FEATURES

### The Meinl logo

is applied to the underside of the head.

### The wood

repinique is loud, cutting and articulate.

### There are reinforcement

rings around the top and bottom of the repinique.





Wood repiniques are often played by the leader of a samba band and Meinl's is loud, cutting and articulate enough to 'talk' to a band in full flight, yet it retains a warm and harmonic sound. Made of rubberwood with chrome plated hardware, this drum is only available in 12"x10" dimensions. Tuning is via the bottom side of this drum and with that in mind, the countersunk bolt heads are a great idea – they prevent stabbing your muffling hand like on some other manufacturers' models. Available only in a high gloss African Brown finish, it also has reinforcement rings inside the tops and bottoms to strengthen the drum and focus its timbre.

### Jingle all the way

Available in traditional 10" and 12" sizes, the true identity of Meinl's rubberwood pandeiros is revealed when you pick them up and notice their substantial weight. They boast a dark chestnut wood finish and have very thin natural goat skin heads. I noted a hugely resonant and warm sound and found tuning easy with the included tuning key. These models also feature two rods per lug for safer tuning; most traditional models have only one each. This prevents loosening of the

lugs during playing but adds extra mass to an already weighty instrument.

Meinl say that their solid jingles provide a brilliant and cutting sound and this is no lie. When combined with the thin goat skin heads they provide a beautiful mix of deep resonant tones that complement the cut of the jingles. You get a very brief, clipped jingle sound with a pandeiro so don't think of it as anything near a tambourine. This is a notoriously difficult instrument but Meinl have produced a model that is easy to learn on.

The samba shakers in the range are quite interesting and are offered in many configurations but are all constructed from the same materials. Aluminium with a light feel and traditional reassuring ribbed areas on the wider middle section facilitate extended and accurate playing. They are available in small, medium and large sizes. If you need even more shaker you can opt for a double shaker or a gigantic triple shaker.

Filled with solid steel shots, they have a really lush sound when played gently and this timbre really opens up when played more forcefully with a grittier, much louder sound that contrasts well when combined. The thin aluminium shells are not up to whacking them on bells, etc, so use them wisely and they will indeed be warm and cutting.

Also supplied is a selection of bells – small and large steel cowbells, a large aluminium cowbell and small and large steel a-go-go bells. The steel cowbells were shrill with a long ringing tone controlled with stick-on dampening patches. The aluminium version was more muted and I felt that it had less to offer as a result. The a-go-go bells were generally high-pitched and had a beautifully resonant ringing tone with the smaller bell able to be stand-mounted via the included bracket. Just choose your size, amigo! **R**

## RHYTHM VERDICT

Meinl's Samba Series seeks to recreate some classic sounding instruments but with bang up to date construction methods and innovative improvements that can only enhance your samba experience. Beautifully light (perhaps too light for some) and surprisingly affordable, they would be an excellent choice for schools or samba groups who don't want traditional heavyweight instruments, and are particularly good for younger players and people who don't want to lug a heavy instrument around their neck. The series represent good value, durable and, above all, great sounding instruments that allow you to enjoy playing samba even more.

**+** Lightweight, affordable, articulate instruments, thoughtfully made and with loads of volume.

**-** The only slight limitation is the lack of choice of finishes on the wood repinique.

**RATING**

