

NEW GEAR

THE 'MALI-WEAVE'

method of head tuning is used, the strong double-braided nylon ropes holding the head secure with a counterhoop

MEINL ORIGINAL AFRICAN-STYLE ROPE-TUNED WOOD DJEMBE



From £119 As Meinl adds some traditional models to their djembe inventory, Charlie Price taps into these 'original' re-creations

Even with the sad news of the recent passing of its founder, Roland Meinl, the German company seems to be going from strength to strength, particularly with its growing catalogue of beautifully conceived, top quality percussion lines. Meinl has long been the European leader in creating exciting, highly playable and affordable djembes, and their presence on stages worldwide is testimony to this. They have a wide range of wooden and fibreglass models, featuring key tuning (or rope tuning on their 12" rubberwood model) although this range is the first to be made from a single solid piece of plantation-grown mahogany, a weighty but reassuringly resilient and highly resonant tone wood. Meinl's Water Rhythm series, of which this djembe is part, is denoted by a sequence of hand-carved wave-shaped swirls on the drum shells, and these dark indentations complement the natural matte finish beautifully.

Build

Meinl sent *Rhythm* the 10" (medium) and 12" (large) models to try our hands at. Their solid

mahogany construction means that, although they weigh in on the heavy side, they boast a reassuring stability. The responsive natural goatskin heads are tuned via the traditional 'Mali weave' method, with strong double-braided nylon ropes holding the head down with a slim counterhoop. The drums come pre-tuned but can be tightened if required.

The 10" diameter drum stands 20" high and would be great for the younger player or as a high 'solo' drum. The 12" is 24" tall and would be the best choice as an all-rounder. All models come supplied with a pro-quality padded nylon bag, which zips up at the top and will prevent knocks and damage to the head. This is a great idea, as you will definitely want to look after these beauties!

Hands On

The first thing that strikes you about this range, soundwise, is the sonorous boom of the bass tones, which have significantly more volume than most thinner-shelled models. Even the 10" had serious bass capabilities. Both models contrasted well, with delicate and highly articulate open tones towards the edge

and impressive high-pitch slaps. These are traditional, authentic instruments that hark back to original African designs, and their sound certainly reflects that. The tuning holds exceptionally well and should provide trouble-free, dependable consistency throughout the life of the head.

Verdict

The Water Rhythm series is one of three new solid mahogany ranges, with Meinl's Moon Rhythm and Earth Rhythm djembes rounding off the collection and sporting fancier carved finishes and variations on the goblet shape. The Water Rhythm drums are the most understated in their design and finish, represent superb value for money, effortless comfort when playing for extended periods and, most importantly of all, they sound wonderful. With plenty of volume, cracking articulation and that simple but effective padded bag to protect the djembe, any percussionist would be proud to own such a well-crafted instrument. **R**

Rating ★★★★★

ESSENTIAL SPEC



PRICES

Medium	£119
Large	£189
Extra Large	£229

SHELL MATERIAL

Mahogany

CONSTRUCTION METHOD

Solid, single-ply shell

BEARING EDGE

Smooth

FINISH

Natural wood with carved detailing

HOOPS/RIMS

Steel counterhoop

SUPPLIED HEADS

Natural goatskin

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