

NEW GEAR

EXCLUSIVE

LIQUID TRIANGLE has a large triangle welded to a water-filled base

SPARK SHAKERS have a tactile, perforated UFO shape containing steel pellets

ESSENTIAL SPEC



PRICES

Bill Saragosa Line:
Helix Bowl, £68
Liquid Triangle, £70
Galaxy, £85
Spark shaker, £20
Headed Spark shaker, £20
Spin Spark shaker, £22
Clamshell Spark shakers, £36
Wakah shaker, £17
Cone Stack shaker, £75
Luis Conte Artist Series Studio shaker (red), £13
Luis Conte Artist Series Live shaker (black), £13
Luis Conte Artist Series Stadium shaker (grey), £13

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MEINL SIGNATURE HAND PERCUSSION



From £13 Meinl joins forces with Bill Saragosa and Luis Conte. Charlie Price discovers the joys of metal and water

Bill Saragosa might not necessarily be a household name but it was he that devised the revolutionary Spark Shakers that we will examine later, as well as some brand new 'metal' percussion creations. Meinl's association with master percussionist Luis Conte is well established with a signature range that includes congas, bongos and timbales. Here, though, we examine his trio of dual signature shakers.

Build

The Helix Bowl looks like it should be attached to a Dalek, consisting of a steel alloy hollow base cup with a wobbly steel spiral welded to the base. Meinl include a beater with the choice of metal or rubber striking surfaces, and there's a drastic difference in both feel and sound in each. The steel alloy exterior has a black nickel finish that's classy

as well as looking durable. Liquid Triangle again has a similar shaped base but this time it's a closed design that contains water. Welded to the top is a large triangle in the same finish, with the other end free to vibrate. The most out-worldly creation is the Galaxy, with two liquid-filled resonating chambers joined by a long circular steel ring orbiting the chambers. The Galaxy is played with the supplied padded beater, but I also had great results using timpani and marimba mallets.

The Cone-Stack is the largest model among Saragosa's range of shakers. Resembling salt and pepper pots from the USS Enterprise, they are essentially two steel alloy shakers that can be played like maracas or screwed together to achieve a formidable four-chambered 'stereo' effect. The Spark shakers are so easy to play, with a tactile, perforated coated steel UFO shape containing coated steel pellets. The Spin

Spark' shaker features a regular Spark shaker joined via an adjustable screw to a circular metal base that radically changes the pitch of the instrument as you loosen or tighten it. The third Spark shaker features a goatskin head on one side with the other sporting a flatter profile than the rest. The wooden Wakah shaker is small enough to be cupped in the hand, with two separate chambers joined by a plastic membrane and a mutable sound hole to control its subtle 'wah' sounds.

Meinl's Clamshell shakers have a similar Spark shape but a smooth finish, a split middle and a plastic membrane that changes its tone when squeezed. Luis Conte's trio of signature shakers are all the same light plastic shape and are essentially three shakers in one easy-to-play design. They're colour coded, with red being the softest tone, black when you need more volume, and grey being the loudest.

Hands on

The Helix Bowl is gripped gently, held to your belly and struck or scraped down the helix with either end of the beater, producing an eerie 'boing' tone that's controlled by fingering the base with the grasping hand. There are

GALAXY HAS TWO
liquid filled resonating
chambers joined by a steel ring



HELIX BOWL IS
held to your belly and
struck or scraped



similarities between this and the Berimbau - fun to experiment with, and by moving the base away from the body you get differing levels of resonance. The Liquid Triangle might take some practise but this will be fun, as you discover that by tilting the base at different angles the tones of the triangle vary greatly. The Galaxy is one of the strangest-looking percussion instruments ever conceived and is a sound effects dream when played with a padded striker or mallet. There are a myriad of tonal possibilities and by inverting the Galaxy the pitches change radically, with spooky effects possible by striking the 'orbiting' spiral. The Cone-Stack was easy to play, with the centres so well balanced, and you can change the various lush tones by cupping the open bell chamber. When screwed together you have a formidable beast that benefits from two controllable chambers!

The regular Spark Shakers' dark 'crunchy' sounds when cupped with the palm and bright, singing tones when played open-handed make the Sparks a real pleasure to play. Both Spark Shakers feel highly tactile so combine the two when you need to thicken the tone, and by loosening the base on the Spin Spark its tone drops gradually. The

Headed Spark offers many varied sound options and can be combined with another Spark for compression effects against the head. The Wakah shaker is quite small with easy muting possible with your thumb to activate its 'wah' effect. The pair of Clamshell Sparks have two different pitches, and whilst playing you squeeze the shaker to close the gap thereby altering their pitch. Luis Conte's artist series shakers are a delight to play with the sand-like subtle red model a perfect studio shaker and the black model still in that ballpark, but louder. However, if you play in larger live situations then Mr Grey is most definitely the guy to consider.

Verdict

Meinl's open-mindedness when collaborating with artists such as Bill and Luis is quite refreshing, and these exciting new creations are sure to delight the more adventurous percussionists out there! The prices are more than affordable given the quality of manufacture and all the instruments definitely look like they'll take the knocks and serve you well for years. **R**

Rating ★★★★★

Resembling salt and pepper pots from Star Trek, the shakers can be played like maracas or screwed together to achieve a formidable four-chambered 'stereo' effect

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MEINL BIRDS/
Waterfall. Atmospheric sound effects that simulate the sound of birds or cascading waterfalls.