

Meinl Cajons

From £94 | Meinl's latest box drums offer new materials and something for younger players, **Charlie Price** reveals.

ESSENTIALS



PRICES

Meinl Cajons

Cherrywood	£229
Fibreglass	£123
Conga	£209
Nino	£94

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Meinl's brand new fibreglass-fronted snare cajon, from their ever-expanding range of world percussion, features a rubberwood resonating body with a premium fibreglass frontplate (or 'tapa'). It is finished in radical Black Sparkle and was definitely the most rock'n'roll-looking of the four models we were sent.

The frontplate felt extremely flexible and it seemed that each stroke gave a little bit more, something you will either love or hate. The sounds were certainly interesting, although they weren't all quite my cup of tea, as they had much less sensitivity at lower volumes and considerably more muted tones overall. This model features a padded sitting surface and four large chunky rubber feet so you can do your thing without fear of disappearing over the back or it tipping over mid-beat! It also features fully adjustable 24-strand snare wires that are cut and left to hang free at one end (supported by a length of Velcro-esque material) and securely fastened at the other to a solid knurled metal knob. This knob can be turned to control the amount of sizzle and bite as the snares come into contact with the inside of the frontplate.

I thought that this model might be better suited to louder contemporary or electric settings and it did produce some unique sounds when amplified. This fibreglass model is quite different to traditional wooden fronted cajons and you would most certainly need to hear it for yourself, preferably through a decent PA system.

The next new model was my pick of this bunch and featured a red oakwood

resonating body with a cherrywood frontplate and, like the fibreglass model, is 49cm tall with the same adjustable internal snare mechanism. This was an immediately satisfying sounding instrument that contrasted really well, especially with other acoustic instruments, possessing a beautifully warm and resonant quality of sound that I felt was lacking in the fibreglass cajon.

Although not the loudest, it was robust and extremely musical. All these instruments sound hugely different when miked up and offer distinctly different personalities, which is a definite bonus as more sounds mean more choices!

Finding Nino

Meinl offer two kids' cajons in its Nino range, both featuring rubberwood resonating bodies with either an ash wood or, as in the case of the review model, a beautiful makah-burl wood frontplate. My four-year-old daughter's eyes lit up when I presented her with a perfectly scaled down version of its older siblings. Standing only 13" tall, they are cute but extremely playable and intriguing to youngsters. The makah-burl swirl pattern and little elephant logo were very appealing to my daughter, who sat straight down and copied my moves on her cajon. It was great fun jamming with a player half your size playing such a well made miniature cajon.

As you might expect, the bass tones on the Nino cajon aren't as loud, but are perfectly adequate for wee ones to learn on, with cracking slaps enhanced with an adjustable sizzle effect via two guitar strings that run down the inside of the frontplate. You can reduce or remove this sizzle completely by turning the two Allen screws at the bottom of the cajon with the supplied key – stored inside the instrument – and this sound might be slightly kinder on parents ears too!

Meinl's conga cajon is the most radical in terms of design and is a hybrid four-sided rubberwood conga-sized instrument that is topped with a black makah-burl wood playing surface instead of a natural skin head. I found its bass response to be limited and of a quieter, duller tone than was expected, which was a stark contrast to the excellent loud cutting muted and open slaps. It has the same adjustable snare unit as the other

cajons but the one annoying thing about this, and all the models that feature this unit, is you just can't get rid of the rattling altogether even if you wanted to. There was always a ghostly reminder of those snare wires striking themselves on harder strokes as they weren't in contact with anything else to prevent this. A minor gripe, although some gaffa tape around the flailing snare wires might solve the problem, but would no doubt change the snare sound as well. **R**

KEY FEATURES



The pick of the bunch boasts a red oakwood body and cherrywood frontplate.

Use this knob to control sizzle and bite.

GEARREVIEWS



Meinl's conga cajon is the most radical of the new models in terms of design.

RHYTHM VERDICT

Meinl already offered four box cajons with different sounding frontboards ranging from American white ash (with internal snare mechanisms) to makah-burl wood, rubberwood and fibreglass which have guitar string sizzle effects inside. These new additions to the range expand on these models and introduce some interesting new ideas that offer the percussionist a lot of new choices. Meinl recently repositioned that knurled knob halfway down the right side so that you didn't catch your leg on it. I've never had problems with their usual positioning near the top, but it's great that Meinl seek to improve on such details.

Well made, attractive cajons with some innovative new ideas.

That constantly audible rattling snare mechanism – argh!

RATING



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