



“WHAT IS THE MOST SUITABLE DIDGERIDOO FOR A INEXPERIENCED PLAYER?”

The title of this article (which was shortened for the sake of synthesis and paging-up reasons) might seem at first sight a little misleading. A beginner might expect to find here a magic formula to help him pick his first didgeridoo ever. Or, maybe, he might hope to find suggestions and directions about where to go buying the most suitable instrument for him to take up playing.

Instead, the subject is much more complicated, because in it are several variables, which every beginner - basing him/herself upon his/her own personal needs - will have to associate a certain value to.

Therefore, the question should be more properly asked in these terms: "What peculiarities, both sound and not, must have a didgeridoo in order for it to be suitable (also) for a beginner?".

Having rearranged the question, I can now answer it, but not before making an important preliminary statement: there is no fixed rule to understand whether a didgeridoo is suitable for a beginner or not. Instead, he/she must be able to make out some of the peculiarities of the instrument he/she is about to buy. Actually, the ideal solution would be having an experienced player helping the beginner in the purchase.

Thus, I hope this article of mine will be helpful to those who do not know experienced players to whom asking for advice.

1- Estimate your available funds

The range of price of the didgeridoos on sale in stores and on Internet sites is extremely wide - from € 20 up to € 2000.

Personally speaking, I must say that I played € 200-instruments that a beginner would have found very hard to play. On the other hand, I sometimes happened to play similarly priced instruments that would have been perfectly suitable also for a beginner. In other occasions, I played €1000 instruments that even an experienced player would have had a hard time playing.

Therefore, in estimating your available funds, keep in mind that the amount of money you're going to spend, be it massive or little, won't make you certain you're buying an instrument that's suitable for you.

Thus, before spending whatever sum, I strongly suggest to appraise the extent of your motivation - that is, to understand why you decided to take up playing the didgeridoo. If you're feeling irresistibly attracted toward the didgeridoo, I suggest to invest at least €150-180.





You can find good instruments at that price. Moreover, should you become an experienced player, your first instrument might always come in handy.

Instead, if what you have in mind is just giving it a try and seeing what happens, I suggest to go to a hardware store and buy a €5 plumbing PVC pipe.

I'm writing this because, in most cases, a PVC pipe will be easier to play and will have a better sound than most of the bamboo and/or teak didgeridoos you may find on sale in 'ethnic' stores at no less than €60 (actually, I still have to find a bamboo and/or teak didgeridoo with a better sound than a PVC one).

Of course, should a beginner dislike the notion of playing a PVC didgeridoo, and have a very limited availability of money (less than €60, I mean), he/she may buy a bamboo and/or teak didgeridoo: I wish him/her good luck, and not to lose heart!

2 - What key should your first didgeridoo be in?

This question doesn't have a univocal answer: two different instruments in the same key may greatly differ in terms of playability.

Anyway, didgeridoos in the keys of **F**, **E**, **E-flat** and **D** are usually easier to play for beginners. Playing in such keys requires less effort than playing in **F-sharp**, **G** or even high **A**, while playing in low keys such as **C**, **B** or **B-flat** (not to mention the cavernous low **A**!) requires a great deal of lip control.

As stated above, this doesn't necessarily mean that a didgeridoo in **E** will always be easier to play than one in **G**. But, more often than not, this is just the case.

Should you find yourself having to choose between two didgeridoos that greatly differ in terms of pitch (let's say, one in **C** and one in **G**), I'd suggest to pick the one in the lower key, for two reasons.

The first is that, unless he/she has a certain amount of familiarity with wind instruments, a beginner will find that a low-pitched didgeridoo is easier to play than a high-pitched one, since it requires less lip strength. The second is that any possible mistake made while playing the fundamental will result less 'embarrassing' and depressing if you're playing a low-pitched instrument.

If, before taking up playing the didge, you've already played other wind instruments, things may be very different.

For instance, two friends of mine are two experienced and very good wind instrument players: one plays the trumpet, and the other the tuba. When I heard them playing the didgeridoo, I noticed that the trumpet player found himself more at ease with a high-pitched didge, while the tuba player was more comfortable playing a low-pitched one. This was because they both benefited from more than 10 years spent playing wind instruments





bearing a certain amount of similarity with the didgeridoo.

For this reason, should a beginner be a former wind instrument player, I'd suggest him/her to choose a didgeridoo as similar as possible to the wind instrument he/she used to play (or is still playing).

3 - What measures should have a didgeridoo in order to be suitable for a beginner?

To better suit an inexperienced player's needs, a didgeridoo should have a length approximately comprised between cm 110/120 and cm 150/160. In most cases, instruments shorter than cm 100 or longer than cm 170/180 require a great deal of lip strength and control and of diaphragm muscle pressure - all qualities that beginners seldom have, unless they are long-time wind instruments players.

The didgeridoo's bell (the instrument's distal part, that is) shouldn't be larger than 1/12 of the instrument's length. Also, a beginner's didgeridoo shouldn't flare abruptly (at least, not in its last cm10), but widen gradually.

The mouthpiece should be round or at most slightly flattened - slightly oval, that is. Usually, mouthpieces' dimensions range between cm3 and cm4; therefore, an almost ideal mouthpiece should have a cm 3,2/3,6 bore (if round) or be cm 3,2/3,6 wide and cm3,2 high if oval. I don't recommend a beginner buying a didgeridoo with a mouthpiece whose bore is less than cm3.

For what regards its shape, a beginner's didgeridoo should be as straight as possible; curved and/or odd-shaped didgeridoos should be avoided.

Finally, it's very important to take account of the way a didgeridoo widens or tapers from the mouthpiece toward the bell.

Starting from the mouthpiece, the first 2/3 centimeters of the instrument should have the same bore (you can check your instrument's bore simply pointing it toward a light source and looking into it).

Past the first 2/3 centimeters, the bore should slightly narrow. If this doesn't happen, it's no big deal, but it's very important that the bore doesn't widen for at least 1/5 of the instrument's total length. Beyond that point, the bore can widen gradually and evenly toward the bell.

I don't recommend buying didgeridoos whose bore abruptly and considerably widens immediately past the mouthpiece. This would make very hard for a beginner learning to control the air flow inside the instrument.

The same can be said of didgeridoos whose bore narrows abruptly and considerably along the instrument's body.

At this point, many of you are probably thinking:

"We like very long, curved didgeridoos, with huge bells and a thick body, so don't tell us to buy straight didgeridoos, no longer than cm 150 and with small bells!"





This is common mind among beginners.

I must remind everybody (experienced players - who often forget they too once were beginners ! - included) that this article was written in order to help beginners to pick the instrument most suitable for them.

Unfortunately, in most cases beginners seem to like instruments that aren't suitable for them at all.

Therefore, what I have to tell them is that, should you happen to hear someone playing super-fast riffs or unbelievably intricate rhythm patterns on an odd-shaped didgeridoo, don't let yourselves be deceived: sure enough, you're listening to a veteran didgeplayer with several years of playing under his/her belt.

Is it possible, after all, to have more definite directions?

Many of you, anyway, probably want to have more definite directions about what instrument to buy to take up playing the didgeridoo. My suggestion is to buy Charlie McMahon's Didjeribone®.

The Didjeribone® is a PVC sliding didgeridoo (that is, it consists of two PVC pipes sliding one into the other) which, as it happens with the trombone, the brass instrument that changes key by varying its length, allows its player to change key mid tune. Its key range goes from a high **G** to a low **B**.

It's an excellent tool to fully train the lips: in fact, according to the note you're playing, your lips will be stimulated in a different way (actually, a good exercise is varying the instrument's length while playing the drone tone).

Furthermore, choosing the Didjeribone® will spare you any dilemma regarding what key your first didgeridoo should be in.

Moreover, the Didjeribone® rubber mouthpiece is ideal for a beginner, since it's perfectly round, smooth and with a cm 3 diameter. Finally, the Didjeribone® is very light, is very comfortable to carry about and has a good price/quality ratio.

For further information, I suggest to consult the following web pages:

<http://www.didjeribone.net>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3T2P8fGHRnk>

In conclusion...

It should be clear now that, for a beginner, picking his/her first instrument it's not easy. As stated above, the best solution would be having an experienced player advising him/her; otherwise, I hope this article may come in handy.

In any case, should you buy a didgeridoo not suitable for taking up playing, don't lose heart. Instead, seek help and advice on some Internet forum, where is always possible to find plenty of useful information about how to improve your instrument's performance or how to overcome the obstacles you might find on your path toward being an experienced didgeridoo player.

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