

7/05

Rating a Didjeridu by Alan Tower a tool

There are no two snowflakes alike and so it goes with didjeridu's, with the wide parameters of materials possible for the stick, the shape and contour of the bore, the mouthpiece, the bell, the length etc. At the same time no didjeridu can do all things exceptionally well. One of the reasons is because the bore must be configured in a certain way to be exceptional for some attribute, which makes it not as good for others. So it's a series of tradeoffs. Particular pitches will generally excel in certain categories based on the parameters of that tonal center.

Here are a few categories to consider when thinking through a didjeridu purchase and/or just becoming more aware of what there is that a didjeridu can do (for you). There are others. Most of us will be naturally drawn to exploring some of these parameters and not so interested in others, but any can produce beauty explored with the right intention with the right didj. Ratings are subjective and any help you can get from other players is useful in your assessment. Some categories are more subjective than most, so I have broken those down into multiple concepts. *Of course there is the unique spirit of each didjeridu which transcends the categories below.* Feel free to use a blank version of this chart to help with making didjeridu choices. I have included an example below to give an idea of how being exceptional in some categories translates to only average in others. A future article will explore more in depth this concept of trade-offs and some of the physics behind it all.
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Example: The Freak

I was catalyzed to create this chart upon recently receiving a didjeridu from South Africa, crafted in 2000 by Jusse Nayelli. Its name comes from the fact that he characterizes it as a freak of nature agave stalk. It was used throughout The Eternal Presence (2002) a 4 didjeridu recording made in the Hawk Hill Tunnel overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge. The total rating for this didjeridu is 90 out of a possible 105. This is the highest rating of my top 6 didj's. However, if categories were weighted as to importance, sound quality would naturally be very high on the list resulting in this didj's score being lower. The sound is tight and somewhat compressed due to the thin bore extended taper which is what provides some of its superior qualities as well.

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note: this chart is an example of rating a didjeridu made by Jusse Nayeli

- Categories below are not listed in any order of priority

• I=Insane (5) E=Excellente(4) G=Good(3) A=Average(2) F=Functional(1) P=Poor(0)

The Freak (key of F)	I	E	G	A	F	P
Backpressure- affects the cycle breath and rhythm options	X					
Volume- potential for decibel intensity	X					
Pop- potenial for throat & cheek action to create strong pop	X					
Sound- overall richness, approaches your sound ideal			boxy and compressed			
Sound- the balance of lows and highs you want in this didj				lows missing		
Trumpets- sound quality and musicality of tone row	X					
Trumpets- ease of access and # of toots	X, 5					
Vocals- natural sound quality		X				
Vocals- ease of access		X				
Vocals- barks		X				
Tonguing- clarity	X					
Tonguing- speed	X					
Flutter Tongue - how accesible this is and what sound quality	X					
Pitch drop- how well it accomodates this and to what note		X, 5th				
Pitch raise	X					
Low Breath - capacity for softening and pulling lips back to create a soft muted sound			Pitch raises			
Melody- harmonic series clarity for melodic playing		X				
Dirty gravely sound potential	X					
Visual Beauty - natural contour, grain, artwork et al	X					
Mouthpiece- size and feel			X			
Durability - how the instrument will stand up to use & travel		X				