

Headliner By Meinl Darbukas And Doumbeks

For A Dash Of Middle-Eastern Flavor

HITS

excellent construction quality

aluminum "jingle" darbuka produces unique sound

affordable price range

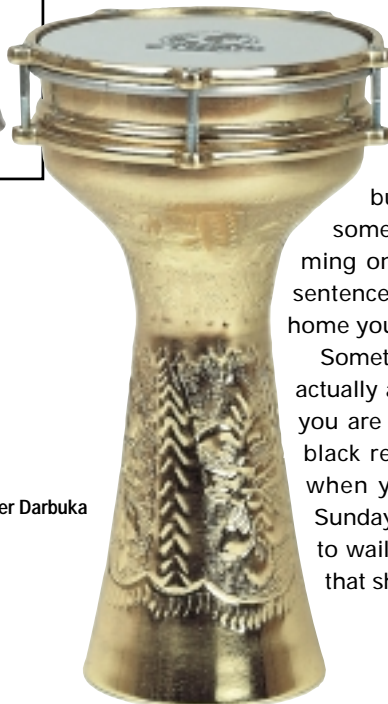
by Norman Arnold



Plain Aluminum Darbukas



Hammered Aluminum Darbukas



Brass-Plated Copper Darbuka

Okay, here's the "short attention span" review of the Headliner By Meinl darbukas and doumbeks: These drums totally *rock*. If you're in the market for some new colors for your percussion palette, run, don't walk to your nearest dealer and grab some.

Enough said. Feel free to turn to the Anton Fig cover story. Or you can read on for more enticing details.

Darbukas

When the drums showed up I pulled them out of the box and started wailing away immediately. They sounded fantastic. All of them. I didn't tune or adjust them in any way. Come to think of it, I still haven't.

The Plain Aluminum model is very well made. It's extremely light in weight but solid and sturdy. It produced a great low tone, with an equally good high, ringing, sharp crack when hit towards the edge. This wide tonal range is exactly what you want in a darbuka. The synthetic heads give a very punchy, almost rubbery sound.

The Hand-Hammered Aluminum "jingle" model is essentially a darbuka with a row of tambourine jungles inside the drum, mounted about an inch under the head. It produces a fabulous sound—very ethnic. (It was my personal favorite.) The low tone it produces along with the jingles is great. When hit closer to the edge, its natural ringing worked with the jingles to make the sound really sing.

The third darbuka had a hand-hammered, brass-plated copper shell. Very solid and noticeably heavier than the aluminum model, it produced a much tighter and more focused sound. That sound was crisp and bright, with fewer overtones than the aluminum drum produced. This model is more expensive than the aluminum drum, and ships with a spare head and a very light carrying case.

I had some friends over and we sat around jamming on these drums. We were all very impressed at how well the drums blended together. Still, within a group, the bright, tight sound of the copper drum really stands out. The small size and lightweight design made the darbukas perfect for young kids too, as evidenced by some neighborhood youngsters who also enjoyed jamming on them. (Show your significant other the previous sentence when you spend all the grocery money to bring home your new set.)

Something to be aware of: Aluminum drums tarnish. It's actually a totally normal process, but the point is that when you are done playing the drums you might end up with a black residue on your hands and clothes. So remember, when your mom comes over after church wearing her Sunday best, screams, "Ooooh, *darbukas*," and proceeds to wail away on your drums, you might want to warn her that she could get a little dirty. Just a heads-up.

Doumbeks

The Headliner By Meinl doumbeks were as impressive as their darbuka cousins. The drums fit comfortably between your knees when you're sitting, and can be played tucked under your arm as well. They're very comfortable and easy to play. The rounded edge of a doumbek is much softer on the hands than that of a darbuka. It's kind of like a "comfort curve" built right into the design. The lugs are inlaid into the metal, and thus are not even noticeable. The rounded rim helps with the traditional style of playing: using the fingers and finger snaps. But it is equally good for getting a slap, as you would get on a conga.

The first doumbek is an Aluminum model with a copper finish. It comes with a carrying bag and an extra head. It had very solid construction and was a pleasure to play.



Aluminum Doumbeks with Copper finish



Hand-Engraved Doumbek

The Hand-Engraved Copper doumbek looked so cool that at first I didn't want to hit it. I just stared at the engraving. The drum could stand alone as a great design piece. Ah, but it was even more fun to play. The thick shell produces a dry sound and a sharp attack.

Both drums were very tight and focused, with loud open tones and a great ring at the edges. They sounded great in the group as well.

I had a chance to record all of the doumbeks and darbukas in various ways in the studio: mic' on top, mic' near the bottom, and mic's top and bottom. The drums all performed very well. They sounded huge yet still very punchy.

Conclusion

The Headliner By Meinl darbukas and doumbeks offer excellent workmanship and playability—at pretty surprising prices. They have a wide range of uses, from jamming with the kids, to playing with the pros, to exhibiting at the art gallery. They're *perfect* for a trip to your local drum circle, and they sound great in the studio. I'm a fan.

THE NUMBERS

Aluminum-Shell Darbukas	
Plain Aluminum, 7½x13⅓	\$ 42
Hand Hammered (with tambourine jingles), 8x14⅓	\$ 62
Copper-Shell Darbukas	
Brass-Plated, Hand-Hammered Shell, 7½x14¾	\$140
Aluminum-Shell Doumbeks	
Copper-Finished Shell, 8½x17⅞	\$145
Hand-Engraved Shell, 8½x17⅞	\$200
(doumbeks include carrying bag and spare head)	

(305) 418-4520, goMeinl@aol.com