



**Zig Zag's djembes** and bongos offer some fairly up-market features for their price.

## ESSENTIALS



## PRICES

10" Oakwood djembe	£59
12" Oakwood djembe	£69
13" Oakwood djembe	£79
Oakwood bongo set	£35

## CONTACT

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# Zig Zag Djembes & Bongos

**From £35** | Can Zig Zag balance quality and affordability? **Charlie Price** tells it straight.

There are so many companies manufacturing hand drums these days that you'd be forgiven for thinking that there are just too many bongos and congas out there. If you're looking for professional instruments then you've got your work cut out trying to choose from the many and varied instruments available. However, the more affordable end of the market seems to be severely limited; both in the availability of different sizes, shapes and finishes, and, more importantly, the build quality.

Zig Zag Percussion has been running for a few years now and offers an exclusive range of percussion instruments. They have sent us a Thai-made bongo set with a matching djembe. The company manufactures three sizes of djembe very much aimed at the beginner/budget market.

That said, these drums offer some fairly up-market features on models that wouldn't necessarily belong in the budget range.

### Organic experience

Zig Zag djembes are available in 10", 12" and 13" diameters. They are constructed from oakwood and feature striking black steel hoops, diamond-shaped tension plates, and tuning lugs. The drum shells are finished in a thick gloss varnish over the natural wood grain and provide an extremely hard wearing and slightly beefy appearance.

They appear to be finished with natural goatskin heads and are quite comfy to play. The heads also give quite a bit when you play forcefully, which I really liked as it seemed to make the whole playing experience slightly more organic. The review model is 12" in diameter and is 22"

high and produces an impressive array of tones with reasonably good bass projection and cutting slaps even when tuned up fairly high. A slight lack of bass is evident when the djembe is tuned really tight, but that is not surprising considering the size of instrument. It would make a good starter hand drum; I imagine that the 10" model would work really well as a starter instrument for a much younger player or as a high solo drum, and that the 13" model would slot well into the bassier end of the spectrum while still being a good all-rounder for the older or taller player.

These drums feature an attractive Turkish carpet-style decorative band around the waist of the drum, which contrasts well with the gloss wood grain. Overall they are finished in quite an understated way, which is unsurprising considering how low their price tag is. There is a protective rubber surround at the base of the drums to preserve the integrity of their shells and to provide an anti-skid feature when the drum is played. ▶

KEY FEATURES



**Black steel hoops** and diamond-shaped tension plates complete the look of the djembes.

**A protective rubber surround** sits at the base of the drum to protect the shells and prevent the drum from skidding.

resting on the floor. However, I did have some problems with this surround falling off a few times while playing, but hopefully this is a one-off problem rather than a design oversight. These djembes come with a bag and their own carrying strap, which is a bonus for instruments in this price range.

**Bongo fury**

Zig Zag also offers two bongo sets; a professional ash wood set and the review model, which is made from

substantial 10mm Siam oak. The set has 7" macho and 8½" hembra drums, securely double bolted to the middle block and featuring the same durable finish and attractive black hardware as the djembes. One of the first things that you notice is their weight. When playing them between your knees, as is traditional, you have to be reasonably careful that the weight of the bongos doesn't hinder your playing by digging in to your legs when you are trying to concentrate on playing music.

Zig Zag appear to use buffalo skin heads on the bongos, and these can be tensioned quite tightly while still retaining a reasonable tone. In fact they sounded thoroughly authentic when playing traditional afro-Cuban rhythms on them and I would very much like to have heard them in an ensemble situation. Another idea is that you could incorporate one of these into your kit for Billy Martin-inspired grooves without fear of destroying a more expensive model with your sticks! **R**

**RHYTHM VERDICT**

These instruments represent extremely good value for money and would suit either a beginner or more experienced player. They are more than up to the task of withstanding some serious abuse – drum circles, schools and colleges take note! As stated earlier, many instruments of this type and specification would cost you much more money and because of this Zig Zag have provided some much needed quality products in what is usually the cheapo territory. The finish actually really grew on me and demonstrates a simple but efficient design brief obvious in all aspects of these impressive instruments.



**+** Good sound and unbelievable value for money

**-** Considering their price, I can't fault them.

**RATING**



alchemy  
cymbals

there is a thin line between

good & bad

alchemy

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