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The Best Bodhrán Drums to Buy?



What makes a real bodhrán? It's a great question, in fact it is the most important question every bodhrán player, new or seasoned, asks themselves when choosing to purchase one.

For me, for 34 years I have researched, tinkered and hammered away trying to figure what exactly makes a great bodhrán beat. You could say I made it my mission. This is what I have found:

THE BODHRÁN SKIN

Obviously, you've guessed it, the skin is the most important part. I notice the different tones no problem of course, but we've done blind tests here, and the results are staggering. Even non-bodhrán players can tell the difference a mile away. It's that obvious.

There is a huge difference in sound between a properly made bodhrán and poorly made bodhrán, so take your time choosing where you buy yours.

Hand-cured and hand stretched, properly conditioned and treated (without the use of chemicals) goatskin wins every single time. So it is no wonder goat skin, compared to synthetic drum heads, lemo, kangaroo, greyhound and deer skin, has stood the test of time and continues to be the skin of choice for real bodhrán makers the world over. Always look for **sustainably sourced goatskin**.

Other things such as painted skins didn't make much of a difference, however most of the bodhráns that you can buy that come ready-painted are generally made for display purposes only so if you plan on playing it I would avoid it if at all possible.

A **heavy skin tends to become more rigid** than a thin skin and you may feel you are playing a board. A fine skin say about 3/4 to 1 mm thick has a resonance in it that a thick skin say 2mm does not have. I use **black electrical tape round the outside of the skin on the bodhrán to dampen the tone**. The bodhrán is a **bass drum**, meaning first and foremost, it must produce a quality deep mellow tone. This is the secret of [the best bodhrán skins](#).

Let's move on.

Ok so we've figured out it is mainly all about the skin but what about the rim. Before I talk about tuneable bodhráns, what difference does a good frame make to a bodhrán? The **frame has to be professionally constructed** to bear the pressure of the skin. It will need a single bar or a T-bar inside the frame so you can comfortably get your hand in behind the skin. You may sometimes rest the back of your hand against the inside bar to put pressure on the skin.

THE BODHRÁN RIM

The rim would need to be at least 4" deep and sometimes up to 6.5" deep. I recommend a deeper rim, but this is fashion and has very little bearing on the sound. *Remember the tone is all in the skin; the way it is treated and the way it is finished.* The rim would have to be conical in shape to affect the sound. I have tried every size rim from 2" to 14" deep and found that the ideal thickness is from 4" to 6". Deep enough to control and shallow enough to spread around the room.

If you are only learning or [thinking of learning I always recommend a non-tuneable bodhrán](#), because if you decide bodhrán playing is not for you, at least it won't break the bank. If you are serious about playing longterm, however, I strongly recommend [a tuneable bodhrán](#). You can achieve so much more with being able to play high bass to give you higher volume and low bass to play quietly depending on the tune.

BODHRÁN TUNING

Being able to tune a bodhrán is a basic need for any serious player. The weather and humidity on this planet we live in is unpredictable and the natural skin reacts to humidity. Owning a tuneable or adjustable

bodhrán allows you to have control over the tension of the skin on your bodhrán. This will mean your bodhrán is not too high pitched or too soft when you go to play in a session.

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How I tape a bodhrán: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tt9TiA2XCDC>

Every bodhrán I make is made with patience, passion and precision, so when it's played, you hear that deep bass, mellow, resonating tone, only achieved from a high-quality crafted drum.

All comments I receive will be replied to directly ~ Paraic

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Comments

Kathleen Sullivan April 11 2019 at 11:32AM

I've been learning on a large non-tunable drum for years and met a woman in the Irish Session who bought a drum from you and I love it. Ready to move on to a more manageable instrument with a deeper tone My in-laws are Irish immigrants from Cork and Connemara and my ancestors originally from Roscommon, Longford and Kilkenny We're visiting Ireland next month!
Kathleen

Mccullarpt November 13 2014 at 05:46AM

wow, awesome article post.Thanks Again. Awesome.

Paraic McNeela May 06 2014 at 11:34AM

Hi Chloe & Andre, check out my online store here <http://www.thebodhranmaker.com/collections/>
@Andre Good to hear, it usually takes around 10 days to arrive in Manhattan / New York
Best Paraic

Chloe April 30 2014 at 01:13PM

Have you got any ?

Andre M. Smith April 30 2014 at 06:15AM

Please tell me the cost to send one bohran of 6" depth to me in Manhattan. I can pay you with credit card. Is there a waiting period?

Cordially,

Andre M. Smith

Family migrated as O'Gowan from Scotland as metalsmiths to a division of MacDonald. Settling for an unknown period of time in County Cavan. Moved to Brooklyn mid-nineteenth century. Father born there in 1913. Me? Born in Washington, D.C. 1938. So, there you have it!

Jack McGrath March 27 2014 at 11:08PM

Hi Paraic; I am interested in purchasing a 14" tunable bodran. I am on the east coast of Massachusetts, 60 miles south of Boston. I was a big band drummer for many years on weekends. I am retired and thought the

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bodran would be a good challenge for me at my age. I would also want a soft case for the drum. If you
e-mail me the pricing and charges I would appreciate it. I was in Dublin seven years ago with two of my
grandsons . At the time I had no interest in a bodran. how times change !!!
Again, Thank for your time.
Jack McGrath

The Bodhran Maker January 08 2014 at 01:28PM

Hi Peter, I'm just spotting this now, I hope your enjoying your new bodhran.

Cheers, Paraic

Peter Sutton December 03 2013 at 09:00AM

Hello Paraic, I was interested in purchasing on of your bodhran's for it to be delivered to an address in France. Could you please tell me how the drums are packaged and by whom shipped. I have had bad experiences in the past and I know that packages can often get a very rough treatment in transport. Thanks in advance,
P

Paraic McNeela June 28 2013 at 03:31AM

Hi Sandra, unfortunately we do not paint our bodhrans, I suggest you contact a good artist to paint the crest on.

Also, we do not open bank holidays, thank god.

Cheers, Paraic

Sandra Kemple June 03 2013 at 12:51AM

I am looking to get a bodharn made with the Liverpool ,This is Anfield crest on the skin is this possible ????
Do you open on bank holidays

lizzy May 25 2013 at 05:32PM

have u pictures of bodhrans

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