

Sanding and Finishing

Paint, plain or other, the style of finish is up to you.

How you finish your didgeridoo is up to you, this is how I finish mine. I am always looking at different techniques and materials to use, so finishes will vary. Regardless of the type of finish to be used, I try to combine protecting the instrument with enhancing the natural beauty of the wood.

Sanding

With the bead of glue removed and the whole surface rough sanded with a sanding disc on an angle grinder (see glue and clamp). The didgeridoo is ready to be sanded down. Working with the grain, I start with a rough abrasive paper first (40 or 60 grit), then work down through ever finer grades of paper: 80, 120, 240 grit. This can be a prolonged process, especially with larger instruments (but is well worth the elbow grease and effort). Don't be tempted to skip grades of paper, it does not get the job done quicker (I've tried).

With didgeridoos, I stop at 120 or 240 grade for the instruments I plan to paint or coat with resin, varnish etc. Didges I plan to finish with a natural finish (plain or Danish oil), I continue sanding using 320 and 400 grade sandpaper. This can and does vary from wood species to wood species as the density, hardness and grain are all different. For example, Yew wood sands smooth very easily, however Meranti hardwood has extremely coarse grain and it is difficult to obtain a smooth finish (without using grain fillers and such like).

Where possible I use electric sanders as this speeds the process up significantly. I predominantly use a ½ sheet orbital sander and a detail sander. Where needed, I'd delicate areas, and difficult to reach areas I sand by hand.



Finishing



I use a range of finishes from plain natural wood coated with Danish oil, painted didgeridoos (assorted media), didgeridoos coated with epoxy resin, and the list goes on. It's a personal choice thing. Some people like decorated didgeridoos, whereas others like plain wood. Some people have also told me they are sceptical of a didgeridoo that has been painted as it can cover up defects in the wood. It's a shame that some didgeridoo sellers are unscrupulous because it sends out the wrong message.

In fact one of the didgeridoos I purchased when I started out had two bands painted round it and I was told it was not hiding anything. I wanted to redo the finish, and low and behold, two great big holes that had been filled. Luckily the gaps were filled ok and does not lose and air so its ok, however I still feel upset that I was misled. Needless to say, I

don't follow such practices.

I like variety. I like didges with spectacular artwork, subtle artwork, no artwork where the grain is shown to its full potential. I like choice, not being stuck in a creative rut saying "That is how it must be done", or "That is how it should be done".

So some of my didges are finished one way, and some another, at all times I am striving to achieve a high quality and standard of finish.

Danish Oil

I use Danish oil on just about all my didgeridoos. I like using it because it provides a hard protective layer against moisture by soaking into the wood. The finish is smooth and gives wood a slightly deeper colour, with a soft sheen that can be 'glossed' up by polishing. When dry, Danish oil can be painted over easily etc. Even if I am planning to use epoxy resin (i.e. a clear finish), I will apply a couple of layers of Danish oil first as it gives the wood extra depth and substance. Where I use pyrography I will do the burning before applying anything else as I do not wish to breath in fumes from burning oil!



Applying the oil is quick and simple on the outside of the wood. I place the didgeridoo on a stand, then using an old rag, liberally apply the oil. Once the didgeridoo is completely coated, the excess will be wiped off with a paper towel. The didgeridoo is allowed to dry for at least a day between coats. If a didgeridoo is to be painted or coated with epoxy resin, I apply 2 coats of oil, if the wood is to be left with a natural finish, then 3 to 4 coats are applied.

The second coat is applied using a cloth then lightly rubbed with 400 grit wet and dry paper that has been soaked in Danish Oil. The next coat I will use either 600 grit wet and dry paper or a plastic washing up 'scrunchy'. By doing this you remove any imperfections in the finish i.e. dust settling on the oil as the last coat was drying. The excess is still removed with a paper towel.

If the oil is to be covered with another substance I will leave the didgeridoo for at least a week to ensue that the oil has totally dried.

Wax



On any didgeridoo that has a natural or oil finish, I put at least 2 coats of wax on top as a final layer of protection. This also gives the didge a nice feel and smell.

Most woods are relatively smooth when sanded and smoother still when treated with Danish Oil, however I will still spend time on the first coat of wax to make sure I work it into the wood as best I can. The wax will fill any small surface imperfections providing a smoother finish.

Using the wax sparingly I rub it into the wood using a soft cloth, then having worked a small area, wipe along the grain to ensure the wax is even and thoroughly applied. I allow several hours or overnight for the wax to harden before buffing it up with a clean cloth. Subsequent coats are applied more sparingly using 0000 wire wool or a soft lint free cloth.

As more coats are applied a soft sheen will develop.

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