

Didgeridoo

Bare Bones Productions

The Didgeridoo is probably the oldest wind instrument in the world and has been played by the Aboriginal People of Australia for thousands of years.

Although this is a very old instrument, the name “Didgeridoo” has been around less than 100 years. The names for these ancient instruments vary, as do the spellings but one of the Aboriginal names for a traditional Didgeridoo is Yidaki. There



are many rock art sites in the Northern Territory of Australia that show images of humans playing the Didgeridoo. Archaeological research shows that some of these paintings date back about 2000 years. It is generally believed that the Didgeridoo originally came from the Northern areas of the Northern Territory where these paintings were found.

The Didgeridoo still plays a very significant role in the ceremonial lives of the Aboriginal people today. Ceremonies are used to evoke the spirits of the Great Ancestors and to sing ancient songs. These songs tell stories about the time of creation, passing down the knowledge of the “Dreamtime” from generation to generation. While many women currently play the Didgeridoo, it is the men who play at the Aboriginal Dreamtime Ceremonies, while the women dance and sing with them. Today, the Didge, as it is commonly referred to, is sometimes played solo in non-traditional contexts. During ceremonies many Didges are played at once with specific combinations of rhythms and voices for each song. Clap-sticks are hit together to keep time for these hauntingly musical songs.



According to Aboriginal belief, all life has a great relationship with other life whether it's Human, Plant or Animal.

Making a Didgeridoo Didgeridoos have been made out of a number of different materials over the centuries including bamboo, PVC and even car exhaust pipes. A traditional Didgeridoo is made out of a piece of Eucalyptus that has been hollowed by termites and is between 4 and 6 feet long. In the northern Territories, two types of Eucalyptus trees grow that are well suited for making a Didgeridoo, Stringy Bark and Woolly Butt. A Didge-maker will find a stand of Eucalyptus and knock on the low branches that termites have had easy access to. When a hollow piece of the right length is found, they will cut it down and scrape out the residue left by the termites. This is usually done by soaking the log or burning the insides out with coals. The bark is then stripped and the outside scraped smooth. The mouth hole needs to be made smooth as well, and beeswax is applied if the hole is not quite the right size. The instrument is then checked for leaks by sealing the ends of the tube with the hands, holding it underwater for a couple of minutes and seeing if any bubbles rise from the wood. Any holes will be sealed with beeswax. When it's dry, the Didge is ready to be decorated. The

decorations on traditional instruments vary depending on the traditional artwork of the tribe that made it. Some artists will use animals from Dreamtime stories while others use traditional dot patterns. These designs are painted or burned on the outside of the new instrument and are very ornate.