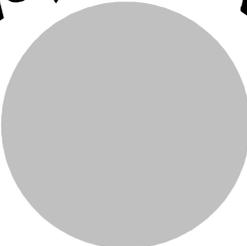


The Didjeridu



A Guide

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permission of the author.

With love and thanks to:

Melody, for her total support.

Rolf, for his kindness.

Rikki, for being there in spirit.

To hear the Didjeridu is to hear the
Universe calling.

To play the Didjeridu is to answer the
call.

It's not the same if you just play the
didj, you have to feel it - to
understand its origin, its maker and
the meaning behind it.

Alan Dargin
Bloodwood: The art of the didjeridu.



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FOREWORD By Rolf Harris

The first time I was really aware of the didgeridoo was when I used the word as a bit of fun in the line: "Play your didgeridoo, Blue," for my song: "Tie me kangaroo down, sport."

I didn't really know what it was. I'd just heard of it vaguely as an Australian Aboriginal musical instrument and had no idea what it looked or sounded like.

When, three years later in 1960, my recording of the song became number one throughout Australia, I was sent a didgeridoo through the mail from an admirer in the north of Western Australia. With it were the instructions: "Blow, suck, blow, suck, blow," on a tiny scrap of paper.

I couldn't get a sound out of it.

During that year, a friend named Harry Butler, played me a tape of some aboriginal singing from Arnhem Land. Accompanying the voice were beating sticks and the most magical repetitive droning sound of the didgeridoo - I was hooked.

I still couldn't play the thing. It was so frustrating.

I was working at a TV. station all through 1960 and one day someone came racing into my office and said: "Quick, there's a white bloke playing the didgeridoo on the lunch time programme."

I tore into the control room and feasted my ears on the sounds being made.

The player was Trevor Jones, who was professor of music at the University of Western Australia. He showed me how to make the basic sound, which I seemed to be able to do fairly easily on the didgeridoo he had with him. Then he explained the principle of cycle breathing.

It was impossible to do at first, but I practised for about a year until I could do it perfectly just with my lips and my lungs and my cheek muscles. However, when I tried to transfer this new know-how to the instrument, the sound cut out immediately I did the first intake of breath.

Talk about infuriating.

Four years later, during which time I must have driven everyone mad with my didgeridoo practise, I bought a new one with a smaller mouth piece. It wasn't an intentional move, it was just that the paintings on the instrument looked really good.

Immediately I tried playing it, the smaller mouth piece worked and the sound kept going as I breathed in through the nose.

I'd got the cycle breathing to work on the actual instrument.

I was ecstatic!

From then on I drove everyone even madder with my didgeridoo practice. Later, when I met some real live aboriginal players and tried to question them as to how they created a certain sound, they found it very hard to explain in English. (They speak about seven or eight different aboriginal languages and English is their last and least perfected tongue.)

They would say to me: "I just play him," or "I just do him."

It was through a chance encounter with Trevor Jones about three years later that I found out how they got the magical sound variation I was after.

"They simply sing a note a tenth above what they're playing."

I tried it and it worked.

That all took place during the 60's, and now thirty years later I've used didgeridoo on numerous recordings - in clubs and theatres round the world and I still get the same thrill when I play it or hear it played, as I did all those years ago.

It strikes a chord that I think is basic to all human beings.

I love it!

If you're interested in the didgeridoo, you're going to love this book!

INTRODUCTION

In 1994, after a year or so of having taught myself to play the didjeridu, I was becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of information available on the subject. So I decided to write my own book, with the intention of making this wonderful instrument more accessible to others who are interested.

I acquired some information from a friend, and was then able to further my research at the Museum of Mankind, where I found some more of the few articles that exist on the didjeridu. Baldock library and the British library have also proved invaluable. I thank them all for their help.

Playing the didjeridu has taken me along many interesting and sometimes unexpected paths, opportunities that I would otherwise not have had. I have been introduced to and met many amazing people. It has also led me to learn a lot more about the Aborigine culture, which has been a wonderful experience for me. It continues to be an honour as I gain further understanding about their wisdom.

Having no previous musical background, the didjeridu has initiated me into the rhythmic heart of nature's 'earthy music'. This has lead me and given me confidence to try other wind instruments.

I am by no means claiming to be an authority on the didjeridu or the Aborigine culture, though I have learnt much in my research, and always enjoy finding out more.

"The Didjeridu: a guide" is very much a Westerner's view, and again, I make no claims for it to be any different.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The references in this book are listed in the back and are cited in the text by an 'R' and a number in brackets. This makes the book easier to read for those who are not interested in the references, but also gives anyone serious in studying the subject the opportunity to do so.

J.C.

PART ONE

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS A DIDJERIDU?

The didjeridu could basically be described as a hollow tube that is played like a trumpet but with loose lips. Or perhaps as an aerophone that is 'lip buzzed'. It is perhaps the most basic (yet enchanting) musical instrument in the world. Its characteristic sound is a deep, reverberating hum, as opposed to the higher pitch 'parp' of the trumpet.

The instrument has been made famous by the Aborigines of Northern Australia, who have mastered the art of didjeridu playing for many years. It is only recently (within the last couple of hundred years) that there has been any mention of the instrument in 'Western' literature, and it is only in the last thirty years or so that the didjeridu has become a 'household' name.

Now, in the event of a rising interest in the 'New Age' and the Aborigine cultures, the didjeridu seems to be gathering a rapidly increasing following. It is not uncommon to find the buskers guitar being replaced with a didjeridu, or indeed the buskers guitar being accompanied by the didjeridu.

There seems to be no correct way to spell 'didjeridu' and here are various combinations found in literature about the subject. For example, it can be (or has been) spelt: didjeridu, didjeridoo, didgeridoo, didgeridu, didgeredoo, digerydoo, dijeridu, didjereedoo, didgereedoo, didjiridoo. It appears that any combination of these is 'correct'. In fact, there is no right or wrong way to spell it, as it is onomatopoeic (i.e.. the name is based on the sound it makes, and not the item itself).

Indeed, the word didjeridu (or related spellings) is not actually an Aborigine name. The name seems to have been introduced by the Australians. The

first mention of this name comes from Darwin, Australia, in the early twentieth century (R41). I myself generally call it a 'didj' and this affectionate term seems to be fairly common amongst 'didj' players.

There are varying types of didjeridus, which can be made of different materials. For example, they can be made of wood, bamboo, plastic, metal, cardboard or clay.

The traditional Aborigine didjeridus are made from eucalyptus or bamboo, but it is apparently not uncommon for them to use the tail pipe from trucks or land rovers. The structure and make of the didjeridu is discussed later.

WHO ARE THE ABORIGINES?

An Aborigine by definition is an original inhabitant of a country. Those who dwelt in Australia first were the Australian Aborigines. They are perhaps one of the oldest people known to mankind, going back some forty thousand years. It is thought that they came from South East Asia, diverging from oriental lineage (R1). They are hunter gatherer people, who wander nomadically, hunt, dance and perform 'magic'. Until recently, they have never been involved in farming, industry or the world of finance. The Western way of life was unnecessary for their survival and was therefore meaningless to them.

Some tribes believe that their ancestors came across the sea (R55), but according to Nile (R45), there was land connecting Australia to South America or Asia when the Aborigines came to the land they now live in. According to Lawlor (R34), twenty thousand years ago there was an ice age where Australia, New Guinea and the tip of South East Asia were joined as one land mass, and no doubt it is possible that this 'land massing' has occurred before in previous cold eras.

Their own history has been passed down by word of mouth in the form of stories and mythology. They have no written language, and it is clear that their stories and their vocabularies vary from tribe to tribe. For this reason, some of the stories told and information given in this book will probably not apply to all tribes.

The closest the Aborigines come to a written language are simple markings on 'message sticks' (R53). These markings are symbols for specific events, or a reminder to the carrier/messenger of his message.

I feel it would be good to explain a little about their ideas on the "Dreamtime", the creation of everything. This will give more of an 'atmosphere' with which to understand the nature of the Aborigine people and the didjeridu. The following story is based mainly on the story told in Bruce Chatwin's book, "The Songlines" (R14).

Before mankind came into the world, there existed two races of beings. There were the ever youthful 'Sky Gods' who lived in a plentiful paradise. These Sky dwellers were unconcerned and uninterested with ways of the Earth (though some tribes believe that the sky people made humans and other animals out of rocks). According to Robinson (R51), J.W. Gregory followed a map from legends of the Sky Heroes to a place which he excavated. He found bones of diprotodons and concluded that these extinct 'bird' creatures were the Sky Gods of the Aborigine stories. There were also the Ancients or Ancestors, supernatural beings who slept under the Earth's surface. The Ancients had always been old, and had created themselves from clay.

On the first day, the Sun, who had also slept beneath the Earth (with the moon and the stars), decided it was time to be born. It pushed its way through the Earth's crust and stayed in the sky. The moon and stars followed later on that evening.

Feeling the warmth of the sun, the Ancestors began to stir. They then gave birth to the different animals, each Ancestor responsible for a species. They then came out of their holes (which became water holes) and began to sing. Each Ancient walked along a path, naming all the objects around into existence. A shrub here, a rock there, a tree to the right, a waterhole to the left. All things were sung into existence, their names weaved into song.

The Ancients sung all over the world, and when everything was named, they grew tired and sunk back into the ground. This is how the world came to be.

The Ancestors left behind a network of 'Songlines',

a melodic map of all things, covering the whole world. Each path or songline belongs to a certain clan called a 'Dreaming'. Each clan is a descendent of one of the Ancestors. A song therefore is a part of a map. If a person knows a song, he also knows a pathway/songline, which will allow him to find his way across the country. One pathway may cross through perhaps twenty different languages, but the tune remains the same. This means that if an Aborigine goes beyond his language 'barrier' he can be recognised by others of the same dreaming by the tune that he 'hums'.

With regards to dreamings, an Aborigine will not kill or eat the animal of the dreaming he belongs to, as it is punishable by death. He also cannot paint his own dreaming as he believes it may be too powerful for him, and may kill him (R14). He can sing songs about his dreaming, but apparently not those of other dreamings.

When an Aborigine goes 'Walkabout', he is travelling along his songline. This serves various purposes, for example meeting others of the same dreaming, sharing stories, swapping messages and trading. However, the most important reason for covering part of a songline is to keep everything sung into existence. It is a ritual to keep the land the way it is (R14).

The Aborigines believe that if something is out of sight, it exists only in the 'other world', and not in the real world. Since the Creation, there has been a split in time, consisting of the 'real' world (here and now) and the Dreamtime (a timeless world). It is this timeless world that we slip into when we sleep (R1). It appears that the timeless world is the 'underlying' reality on which our 'real' world is based. This is why it is important (as far as the Aborigines are concerned), to keep the 'real' world sung into existence.

The idea of an 'underlying' reality explains other Aboriginal notions. They believe that before children are born, they are in a waiting/ sleeping state, under the earth (much like the Ancestors before the Creation). When their mother-to-be walks over the spot where they wait, they shoot up through the woman's toe and into the womb. The mother feels this as the first kick of the baby. She then marks the spot where she felt it and fetches

the elders. They then determine what Dreaming the child belongs to. (Others feel that spirit children come through food - e.g.. fish, goanna, tortoise, goose - and this determines the child's dreaming.)

This 'waiting/sleeping' state is used by the Aborigines to explain the presence of 'new' things (such as cars, weapons, planes). They believe that all things have existed forever in the other world, and these things are 'born' into this world at a certain time. This seems to be similar in principle to Leibniz's concept of the universe (R37), where everything has existed in seed form (called 'monads') since the beginning of time. Each monad has a particular continuing destiny to fulfil and will do so in parallel with all the 'infinite' other monads in the universe. This gives the illusion of causation in our perception.

The idea of some rituals is to 'funnel' the power of the Dreamtime into the here and now. The Aborigines have no particular gods, but they do have the Ancestors, who they recreate into the present with these rituals (R3). They also have an 'All Father' or 'Great Father' called Baiame (R48).

How has westernisation affected the Aborigines?

Since the white man invaded Australia two hundred years ago, the Aborigines have suffered at the ignorance of the west. Missionaries attempted to force their religion onto the Aborigines (a race of people with a wisdom and belief system of their own), because they saw them as 'pagan' - the chanting and rituals threatened their christian ways, and so they enforced their hymns onto the Aborigines, who found them obviously unintelligible.

Bruce Chatwin in 'The Songlines' (R14, p23), poignantly describes a tribe of Aborigines (the Pintupi) before and after they were brought into white civilisation. At one time, they were carefree and open-minded, hunting only for what they needed. Despite the arid shrubland, they seldom went without water. They were always laughing and had strong healthy babies. However, the government decided to 'save' these Stone Age men in the name of Christ. Also their land was needed for mining and nuclear testing. The Pintupi were rounded up and put in a settlement, where they died of ill health, fought each other and discovered

alcohol in a big way.

According to MacLeish (R39), the Aborigines foresaw white man's arrival in Australia, complete with their bulldozers and houses. When told that the land does not belong to them they say: "Who dreams this land? Who sings about it? Who? We are the land."

Before Captain Cook's arrival at Botany Bay in 1788, there were around three hundred thousand Aborigines in Australia. This number dropped to forty five thousand (including part-Aborigines) in the mid twentieth century. By 1970, however, the authorities had realised the potential problem of genocide. They 'gave back' more land and 'allowed' the number to run up to eighty thousand half and full blooded Aborigines. However, with the settlements and the westernisation, their traditions and familiar way of life is disappearing ever more rapidly (R1).

A POTTED HISTORY OF THE DIDJERIDU

Perhaps one of the first references to the didjeridu comes from a book called 'Narrative of a Voyage Round the World' (in R41). This was published in 1835 and written by T. B. Wilson. There is a drawing of an Aborigine playing a bamboo didjeridu, called by the natives of Raffles Bay on the Cobourg Peninsula an 'ebroo'. This 'ebroo' was about three feet long. It is mentioned in reference to a native dance. Stokes (in R9) refers to the Port Essington people in 1838, and appears to be under the impression that they played the didjeridu by blowing through their noses. As Berndt (R7, p309) comments, "this, of course, is not so."

Later, in 1893, a man called Etheridge wrote of "three very curious trumpets" (in R42) made of bamboo. He suggested that the membranes that section the bamboo were removed by hot coals being dropped down the hollow. He describes the noise of the didjeridu being very similar to that of the South Sea Island conch.

The playable bamboo comes from the north western region of the Northern Territory. Moyle (R42) suggests that the first didjeridus were made of bamboo and that the first didjeridu players came

from the north-west region of the Northern Territory.

Berndt (R9), adds the following in a paragraph about early reports of the didjeridu:

(Basedow in 1925) says, "to serve the requirements of a single night's performance, a green stem of a native hibiscus might be cut off and the thick bark removed 'in toto' in the form of a pipe ...In 1945 ...only young men played it ...older men regarded it as new-fangled and would have nothing to do with it. At Balgo early in 1958 it was used rarely: but two years later it was very popular indeed. A small trumpet is reported for the Aranda. It is placed to the mouth and singing through it intensifies the volume. This differs from the drone pipe used in the North, which can produce a range of sounds.

An important point to note is that not all of the Aborigine tribes play the didjeridu. Those who play are confined basically to the northern tip of Australia, i.e.. Arnhem Land. MacLeish (R39), for example, reported in 1973 that a quarter of Australia's fifty-thousand Aborigines lived at the northern tip of Australia. There are also early reports of players from Cape York, and there has been a recent spread to the Kimberleys and Gulf areas.

In 1925, Basedow described the sound of the didjeridu in west Arnhem Land, as 'tidjarudu'. However, it wasn't until 1963 that the name 'didjeridu' was set, by Shiels, in the first publication of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (in R42).

The didjeridu has only come very recently to the western world. It is also only recently that so many Westerners have been able to play the didjeridu well. Colin Simpson, who wrote: "Adam in Ochre" in 1950, had this to say about the white mans' attempts (R53, pp66-67):

When a white man tries to play the didjeridoo most of the sounds he makes are either laughable or disgraceful or both. He cannot manage the continuity and variety of sound the crude instrument can provide, because he runs out of breath. You blow into

the long hollow pipe of wood with a burbling of the lips. I know of no white man who can "pull wind" as the Aborigines do and go on and on.

This gives an idea of how the occident has documented the didjeridu, but how long have the Aborigines been playing? Obviously, as 'Western' man discovered and colonised Australia just over two hundred years ago, we have extremely limited knowledge of the history beyond two hundred years of the didjeridu. The Aborigines do not have written records of events, as stories are passed down by word of mouth. There are various stories of how the didjeridu came to be 'invented' (which are discussed in "A Little Mythology About The Didjeridu"), but with no time scale, how can we know its age?

According to most sources, genetic evidence suggests that the Aborigines as a race are perhaps forty thousand years old, though Lawlor (R34) suggests that the Aborigine race is up to four hundred thousand years old. Aubin and Farrenden (R8), along with Lawlor (R34), believe that, going by the legends, the didjeridu has existed for the same amount of time and that it is probably the oldest instrument known to man.

However, a most extraordinary and brilliant piece of deduction has been made by Chaloupka (in R42). Using climatological, geomorphological, archaeological, zoological and botanical data, he has worked out the dating of rock paintings in the Arnhem Land Plateau.

Apparently, seven to nine thousand years ago, the sea level rose, causing the Aborigines to move further inland. There was then a time, around a thousand years ago, when fresh water swamps were replacing the salt marsh plains. After this time, there have been certain flora and fauna which could not have survived there before. For example, the red lily, magpie geese, whistle ducks and other water birds.

It is in the rock paintings of this last thousand years that the didjeridu first makes an appearance, along with goose wing fans (which are still used today to fan fire embers into flame).

This strongly suggests that the didjeridu is less than

a thousand years old. Also from paintings, some of the 'trumpets' that are played have rings on them. Because the northern Aborigines often paint in X-ray (i.e. painting what they can see and what they know to be inside something), it has been suggested that these represent the membranes of the bamboo.

So perhaps the didjeridu has been in circulation for less time than the legends would have us believe.

A LITTLE MYTHOLOGY ABOUT THE DIDJERIDU

There are many stories about how the didjeridu came to be, and here are a few of them.

To many tribes, the didjeridu symbolises the Rainbow Serpent. This serpent is known by such names as Yurlunggur, Julunggui or Julunggul. It is important to note that the reason for the variation in spelling is probably due more to different people writing the word down phonetically as they hear it, as opposed to a difference in the name itself. Having said this, Poignant (R46) reports that there is a distinct change in the name of the Rainbow Snake as one moves across the Northern Territory: Galeru/Galaru, Ungur, Wonungur, Julunggul and Langan. Other names for the Rainbow Serpent are: Yero, Taipan, Mindi, Karia, Kaleru, Kunmanggur, Kunukban, Wonambi, Wititj, Akurra, Jarapiri, Unjuat, Warlu, Numereji, Bolong/Bolan and Ngaljod.

According to Flood (R23), the Rainbow Snake myth is the longest known continuing myth/religious belief in the history of mankind. The Rainbow Snake seems to have appeared 7000 to 9000 years ago, when rainfall increased and the seas encroached on the land. The rainfall would have created rainbows, and hence the myth was helped along. Indeed, the Rainbow Snake is often said to be responsible for the rain. Stories say that Yurlunggur created the rivers as she moved inland. To bring rain, the gunwinggu people sing to the spirit of the Rainbow Serpent through the medium of a decorated sacred 'rain pole' that is made from a large piece of wood (R53).

Yurlunggur is sometimes described as a female, and other times as a male, being symbolic of both

the womb and the phallus. In the Kimberleys and in Goulberg Island (the Maung tribe) he is usually male and in Eastern Arnhemland he is always male (being associated with the lightning snake). In the mainland (the Gunwinggu tribe) she is most often female, known as Ngaljod (where 'ngal' is a feminine prefix). She is sometimes known as the first creator from whose womb, all living things sprang.

The story of Yurlunggur and the didjeridu... (Based mainly on the version of this story in Isaacs - R29 and Cotterell - R15)

A long time ago, the daughters of Kunapipi, the fertility mother, journeyed across part of Australia. The daughters were known as the Wauwelak (or Waugeluk) sisters, and one of them had just given birth before the journey began. This sister had had an affair with a member of a forbidden tribe and so she and her sister were on the run. She was still bleeding. As time drew on, the sisters reached a place called Muwa (or Muruwal), the sacred place of Yurlunggur, the rock python. They stopped at a hut by a billabong (waterhole) to rest. Unbeknown to them, Yurlunggur was near the billabong, having travelled from the sea.

The women were cooking some animals that they had caught, and the mother of the baby went for a swim in the waterhole. Her blood mingled with the water, and Yurlunggur was attracted by the smell. (The Rainbow Serpent is attracted to menstrual blood and will blend with it to create life in the womb.)

The python slid towards the hut, intent on making the Wauwelak sisters its prey. As it approached the hut, the mother of the child spotted the snake and wondered what to do. All of the cooked animals got up and ran away. Yurlunggur slid ever nearer, swaying from time to time, moving to attack. The mother was scared and wanted to distract the snake away from her child, asleep in the hut. She began to dance, her blood still falling to the ground. The other girl came out of the hut and followed her sister in dancing to confuse the snake away from the babe. She was also frightened, bringing on her menstruation, so she bled too.

The snake, unperturbed by their dancing swallowed both sisters and then the child as well. It

then slithered back to a well, and stood up, erect, and told all of the other snakes what it had done. The other snakes in return stood up and listened to Yurlunggur's story.

Some time later, the snake spewed the sisters up again (as they were its descendants), alive and reborn. The elder sister then made a Yurlunggur trumpet to symbolise the python. She blew into it, then threw it in the billabong, where two water goannas climbed in.

There is an age grading ceremony based on this story, called the Djunggewon ceremony, and the details of this are covered later.

Robinson (R51) tells the following story. After a disagreement with a man of the bat dreaming, the red and black flying fox men, went off to their father, the Rainbow Snake. They said that they wanted to kill the man of the bat dreaming, and the Rainbow Snake told them to go.

The bat man was joined by a friend of the toad-fish dreaming. The flying fox men threw spears at the two men but all of them missed. Finally, a stray spear caught the bat man in the hip. The toad-fish man pulled out the spear and carried the bat man away to a shade of branches.

The flying fox men returned to the Rainbow Snake and asked what they should do. The snake took them to a river and cut and made a large hollow bamboo. He filled the bamboo with flying foxes and placed them under the water, leaving them there all day. He then stood up and called out the name of some trees, which sprung up, flowering.

The Rainbow snake blew the flying foxes out of the bamboo tube, and then told them that the flowers on the trees would be their food. They swarmed into the trees.

Always now the Rainbow Snake puts the bamboo to his mouth and blows out the spirits of the flying foxes. He makes a spray of water and the rainbow curves over his head. And the bands in the rainbow are the spirits of the flying foxes blown out of the bamboo of the Rainbow Snake (R51, P31).

The rainbow is said to be formed by the water that Julunggul spits from his drone pipe/didjeridu. The

water can carry spirit children and young flying foxes.

The next story is based on an anecdote from Kaye (R33), who had the story passed onto him. There are also additions taken from an exhibition guide from the Howard Gallery, London (R4). The additions appeared to fit into Kaye's story, and so I have added them here. It is about a giant, called Lumaluma, and two sisters...

One day, while out hunting, two sisters were kidnapped by a giant, who had been travelling through Kunwinjku, stealing women and devouring them. He took the sisters away to be his wives. Being less than happy as the giant's brides, they planned escape. Eventually, when the giant was away, they managed to return to their tribe.

The elders knew that the giant would follow, so they dug a deep pit and concealed it. As sure as night follows day, the angry giant came to claim the sisters back. As planned by the elders, the sisters were used as bait, and the giant fell into the pit. As he lay there at the bottom of the hole, the people of the tribe threw spears into the giant, killing him slowly.

As a last dying gesture, the giant blew into his penis. The most extra-ordinary sound burst forth. The elders were so impressed that they tried blowing their own penises but could gain no such result. Instead, they took branches that had been hollowed by termites, and blew into them, replicating the unusual sound.

The giant is also known as Guruwelin (by the Maung tribe, Goulberg Island) and there are different endings to the above story most of which do not involve the didjeridu. For example:

- after being attacked by spears, the giant pleads with them to stop and escapes to the sea, turning into a whale.
- the spears do not kill the giant and so they burn him.
- he is speared to death but not in a pit.

Kaye also reports another story where the didjeridu sound was made by the wind blowing through a hollow log. The people nearby then mimicked the wind through log, and got the same noise.

Aubin and Farrenden (R8) say that the didjeridu was given to the Aborigines by the Wandjina (the creation ancestors). Its purpose is as a method of communication from the Aborigines to the Wandjina.

Another source (R6) states that the all father 'Balame' (also Baiame) made humans and then the humans created the other animals through "singing them into existence or sounding them into life through the didgeridoo".

Some of the legends are bizarre and fantastic, whilst others are more mundane and possible. Was it an accident that the instrument was discovered or was there a reason? Was it to blow out the termites (perhaps with the intention of using the hollow branch as a drum)? With these questions in mind, from what base did the idea of a bugle (or other wind instrument) come? Perhaps our natural desire to play and be creative allows such 'discoveries' to occur.

SIMILAR INSTRUMENTS AROUND THE WORLD

Do any other cultures play hollow instruments like the didjeridu?

Obviously, the modern day trumpet is a tube which is either straight or curved in nature, and the didjeridu has often been described as a trumpet of some sort. The trumpet is quite a common instrument used all around the world, from Nigerian tribesmen to Tibetan monks, from the world of jazz to the military brass bands, from the long wooden horns of Switzerland to the long bronze tubes found in an Irish Celtic tomb (R8).

In England (and many other countries) there are a few instruments based around the trumpet, e.g.. the bugle, trombone, cornet and others in the horn family (e.g.. tuba, French horn, sax horn).

The trumpet itself has a long history, dating back many years. The Concise Reference Encyclopaedia and Dictionary states that "the earliest known designs of straight trumpets can be traced to the ancient Egyptians." (R3, p1797f)

Bruce Chatwin, author of "The Songlines" (R14)

believes that man originated in Africa and then spread around the world. Is it possible that some of the older tribes may play didjeridu equivalents?

According to Muller (R43), there is an instrument played by the Ituri Pigmies of Zaire (formerly the Belgian Congo, west central Africa) called the molimo trumpet which is played in a similar fashion. Apparently, they now use metal pipes instead of wooden tubes, but the function is still the same.

Also, Aubin and Farrenden (R8) report that there are some remote African tribes who hollow out tree branches and play them in the same way as the didjeridu.

In one of his articles, Jones (R30), discusses similar instruments to the didjeridu and the people who play them. These include:

- People in the Madang area of N.E. New Guinea play a twelve foot long bamboo trumpet called the 'dige'. It is used for 'yodelling' falsetto notes down, but is not played with the familiar deep fundamental hum.
- The Borneo Penihing use bamboo trumpets to sound long 'toots', but do not use the fundamental.
- People in Haiti play bamboo trumpets called 'vaccines'. These are used individually for single notes, but within groups variety can be produced with 'vaccines' of different pitches.

The didjeridu, when compared to many other basic trumpets around the world, is unrivalled in its potential for varying sounds. Its variety of timbre is unique among other drone instruments. It is possible that there is a reason for this unique variety in the Aboriginal play. Jones suggests that this is because "in Australia, the didjeridu is the only instrument of importance, and has had to perform many functions that elsewhere are shared among many other instrumental types" (R30, p32).

It is also worth mentioning, as noted by Jones (R31), that the variety of sound available from the didjeridu cannot be represented by the Western musical notation. This creates some difficulties when trying to describe what some of the noises should sound like.

ABORIGINE NAMES FOR THE DIDJERIDU

As mentioned earlier, the term 'didjeridu' is actually a western name for the instrument, based on the sound that it makes. The Aborigines, on the other hand, have many different names, apparently almost as many as there are language groups. According to Jones (R32), there are around forty names from the north of Western Australia, through Arnhem Land, to North Queensland.

The most English sounding names for the didjeridu used by Aborigines are bamboo pipe or bombo pipe. These seem to be translations as opposed to original native words. Indeed, it has been suggested that the term 'didjeridu' itself is gaining popularity amongst the Aborigines, as time goes by. This may be a part of the 'westernising' process that seems to be going on.

The majority of the following native terms for the didjeridu come from an excellent article by Alice Moyle (R42), but a few come from other sources (e.g.. R10, R28, R31, R53).

- **Djalupi** - a secret word for the didjeridu, used by the Yuulngu tribe.
- **Djalupu/Djalupun** - more public names from two different tribes/languages.
- **Ebroo** - from the Coburg Peninsula.
- **Ipirra/Ulpirra** - apparently comes from central Australia. It took the form of a magic charm and was used by the men to attract potential wives.
- **Jibouli** - used by the Kakadu of Oenpelli when they were still a tribe.
- **Kanbi/Ganbi/Ganbag** - similar or the same as the words for 'click-sticks' (discussed later) in other languages.
- **Karakara** - used in celebrations in which the women can participate.
- **Lhambilbilg** - the term 'lham' comes from the word meaning tongue.
- **Magu** - from the Gunwinggu people.
- **Tjurunga Ulbura** - also known as an Ulbura

trumpet. Used by people in southern Aranda.

- **Uluru** - it is thought that this stems from the words meaning telling/saying story, and from enchant/spell. Its basic roots come from the word for the soul of the dead or the ghost. (Also the Aborigine name for Ayer's Rock.)
- **Waramunga Trumpet** - comes from a desert group north of Central Australia.
- **Yiki-yiki** - made from hollow hardwood saplings, and about seven to nine feet long. Legend has it that certain spirits use this instrument to imitate the call of the emu and it was used by these spirits long before the natives knew how to use it.
- **Yiraga/Jiragi** - has it's meaning based on the word for throat.
- **Yiraki/Yidaki/Yikadi/Yikaddi** - means "emu's throat".
- **Yurlunggur/Julunggui** - based on the Rainbow Snake. It is a large didjeridu, played in Djungguwan ceremonies. It is usually over fifteen feet in length and is also known as a Julunggul trumpet.

OTHER INSTRUMENTS USED BY THE ABORIGINES

The didjeridu is very rarely played (in ceremonies) without some other kind of instrument. Mainly, the accompaniment is from a singer, using his voice. However, there are a few other basic instruments used...

Click Sticks

Click sticks are also known as: clap sticks, song sticks, rhythm sticks, or tapping sticks. An Aborigine name for them is 'bilma'. They are used in pairs, or one is used and struck against the side of the didjeridu.

When used in pairs, there is usually a small stick (the striker) which is thinner and rounder, and a larger stick (the struck) which is flatter and wider. The large stick is held in the middle and the small stick is held at the end (and then struck against the large stick).

Click sticks are generally made of hardwood, and when they are struck together, they produce a clear metallic ring. Sometimes, the large stick has notches cut into it. A rasping noise can be obtained if the smaller stick is rubbed over the notches.

In South Australia, boomerangs are often used as a substitute for the click sticks. (The term boomerang derives from the Aborigine word for wind - e.g., the Turuwal tribe's term for the wind is 'boomori').

Drums

The Aborigines call their drum: 'ubar' or 'ulpirra'. Unlike the skin drums of many ancient cultures, the ubar has no membrane of any sort. It is basically a piece of hollow log that is struck on the side with a smaller stick.

There are various stories that involve the ubar, for example:

A man of the python dreaming, Jurawadbad, was to marry a girl called Minaliwu. However, she had a lover and so refused to sleep with Jurawadbad. He was so angry that he made an ubar drum and laid it across a nearby path. He changed into a python and slithered into the hollow log. Some time later, Minaliwu and her mother were out hunting and they came across the log. They looked in but could see nothing, so they put their hands in and Jurawadbad bit both of them. As they lay dying, he changed back into a man and moved to another area where new ceremonies were taking place.

Another story about the ubar is called the Balnooknook (or Balnuknuk) myth: At the beginning in the Dreamtime, a dingo called Balnooknook chased a bandicoot into a hollow log. On emerging from the log, Balnooknook changed into a man, and the bandicoot changed into a stick called Labait. The man took the stick and struck the side of the log, so that it made the sound of the emu. He liked the sound so much that he took the hollow log to a nearby tribe and showed it to the elders. He told them he would give them the log-drum as long as it was never seen or heard by women or by the uninitiated men. He told the men that the drum's name was Balnooknook, naming it after himself. He made the men a corroboree (dance ceremony), and when the corroboree was over, he went into the ground, never to be seen

again. The elders were left with the Balnooknook drum, and Labait, the drumstick, to beat it with.

In Goulberg Island (the Maung tribe), the ubar represents the uterus of the 'all-mother' and phallic symbol of the 'all father', being the penis of the Rainbow Snake in male form. The ubar is also used in fertility rituals.

Lawlor (R34) refers to another myth where the Rainbow Serpent first manifested himself into the physical world as a long ubar.

Bullroarers

The bullroarer is a small piece of hardwood that has a hole made in one end. The wood is flattish, with the centre being slightly thicker than the sides. A string is then attached to the hardwood, using the hole. The other end of the string is then held, and the hardwood is spun round and round, either above the head of the 'player' or by his side. Apparently, stone bullroarers have been seen but they are very rare. The pitch of the bullroarer is made higher by the piece of hardwood being smaller and/or the bullroarer being swung faster. The sound can be varied by changing the speed of the spin.

They tend to be twelve centimetres to one metre in length and two to ten centimetres in width. They seldom exceed twelve millimetres in thickness (R48).

The string on a bullroarer, when spun, winds up until it can go no further. It then unwinds, and then winds up the other way. The pitch is due to the beats of the turning flat bit of wood against the air. The pitch therefore goes from low to high as the string winds down and the wood goes faster, and then back to low as the string winds up and the wood slows down.

The sound is almost indescribable, though it could be mistaken for the noise of some strange creature (perhaps a giant moth!). This sound is considered by the Aborigines to be a spirit 'voice' and is highly respected. Being held in great awe, the bullroarer is used mainly on important and solemn occasions. It is also apparently used for communication across long distances, for attracting women and for scaring animals.

SONGS AND CEREMONIES

When the bullroarer is used for attracting women, the man uses a small version called a 'bubibub' or 'madiga'. As part of this 'love magic', he carves/draws two snakes and the woman's mark onto the bubibub. He then swings it, whilst singing a song, and the sound 'travels' to her. She thinks of him and 'feels' him, and then comes to him, apparently smitten.

A legend around the bullroarer is as follows (R34): During initiation, Aborigine boys were passed over to a spirit called Dhuramoolan/Dhurramulan (closely related to Baiame, the "All-Father"). As time went by the All-Father noticed that not all boys returned from the ceremonies where Dhuramoolan would pretend to kill, burn and mould the boys back to life. The All-Father realised that the spirit had eaten some of the boys, and was angry. He killed Dhuramoolan and put the spirit's voice into the swinging bullroarer. Now, the initiations to manhood are carried out by the men themselves, accompanied by the voice of Dhuramoolan, the bullroarer.

More information about the bullroarer came from Reed (R48): Baiame, the All Father, invented the bullroarer himself. First he tried making them with stone, but found that they were too heavy for man to use. In his anger with Dhuramoolan, Baiame chopped a tree with such energy that chips of wood flew off at great speed, humming as they spun through the air. He then used wood for the bullroarer and gave it to the wirinuns (cleverman) and taught them how to use it. The bullroarer is also sometimes considered to be the voice of the great father, Baiame.

The legends of Baiame and Dhuramoolan vary from region to region. For example, in the east, Dhuramoolan is the 'all father', but in the west, Baiame takes this role. In other places Dhuramoolan is the one legged son of Baiame. Baiame is also known as Bunjil and Nurrundee.

The bullroarer can also be interpreted as the voice of the Rainbow Snake, Yurlunggur. When the serpent was pursuing the Wauwalak sisters, he threw a lightning bolt at their hut and bits of wood flew off in many directions, humming and buzzing. The first bullroarer was made of a piece of this wood.

When a songman dreams of a big eyed owl, the owl may sing and the spirits may dance. The songman, as he awakens, calls the didjeridu player (or "puller" - R50). He clicks his own sticks, and sings the song of the owl. The didjeridu player will accompany him as he sings the song two or three times, until it is firmly in his memory (R28).

Memory is an essential quality of a good songman, and indeed an excellent musical memory is a requirement of a decent didjeridu player (along with precise and nimble tonguing, perfect seal between lips and didjeridu, and effective breath control).

When a song is created, it becomes the property of the singer and no-one else can sing it without his permission.

The relationship between a songman and a didjeridu player is important. Sometimes a couple will join together and will go on tour around a district, playing and entertaining for food, water and a place to sleep. However, the pair may separate as quickly as they joined, following their own routes to 'fame and fortune'.

Myths are often told in song and may be accompanied by the didjeridu. When people hear the click sticks and the didjeridu, they tend to turn up in dribs and drabs to a cleared space. Some will sit round, whilst others will dance in the clearing.

Robinson (R51, P9) describes a time where the didjeridu is used in a leisurely activity:

Quite often we would be invited down to their camp in the evenings to take part in their sing-songs and play-about corroborees ("big dances"). We would sit with them round a fire in a dry, sandy river bed under the paperbark trees. One man would be playing the drone-pipe, a length of hollow bamboo. Another man would be beating time with the song-sticks, other men would be quivering boomerangs together. We would be clapping our hands or beating our thighs in time with the rest while Jeemborala, the songman, was singing.

Someone would nudge me in the ribs with an elbow. I would look around, and there, dancing behind me on the sand in the moonlight, would be the dancers, the children in the front line, behind them a line of older children, and behind them a line of grown-ups... Some nights the moon would set behind the paperbark trees before we said "Bo-bo" (good-bye), and made our way back to our camp.

Examples of general songs in which the didjeridu is involved, include those of the sandfly and the wasp. In the song of the sandfly, women sway to the music and make scratching gestures. In the wasp song, they will grasp each ear and nod their heads sideways. This tells the story of the buzzing wasp that annoys people when they are trying to rest (R9).

Although many clans have different rules, the following is a rough guide as to how the ceremonies work. In a song, the didjeridu takes second place to the songman. The player must organise himself around both the singer and the rhythm of the click sticks. (The click sticks often start a song, and set the beat.) The didjeridu must be matched to the pitch of the singer, as the singer will not change. However, if there is an unavoidable mismatch in pitch, the singer will continue anyway without much apparent concern.

The leader of a song or 'manikay' (song series owned by a clan or language group) can be one of the following: the songman, the owner of the ceremony, the owner's nominee and/or the most senior representative of the group. He will move rhythmically to the beat, 'dancing' to the song. Accompanying the singer may be the didjeridu, chanting, sticks struck against each other (or against the ground or the didjeridu - or fingers struck against the didjeridu), foot stamping, clapping (hand to hand or hand to buttocks or hand to inner thigh for the women), and the 'ubar' (drum - which has its side struck, having no membrane). The didjeridu accompanies the chanting (with click sticks and ubar) in certain secret ceremonies. However, in other sacred performances, the didjeridu may be deleted altogether. Also, in some of the sacred ceremonies, the click sticks are replaced by boomerangs (which are not normally

used by clans in that region.)

The didjeridu is used in the Wongga dance (R1M), which is performed by men wearing traditional patterns painted on their bodies. Women are also sometimes present and participate in certain parts. The didjeridu, click sticks and the singing are set to a rhythm. It is apparently energetic and exciting and often performed by an open fire.

Simpson describes a corroboree he witnessed, which involved the didjeridu (R53, pp10-12):

Here we wait for the corroboree. The men are down in the bush painting themselves. They will come up when they are ready.

The songman is already here, sitting cross legged in the dusty sand in a shade at one end of the clearing. He holds loosely in one hand his two rhythm sticks, short lengths of dark hardwood, rounded and slightly tapered. With the other hand he strokes his chest, a calm stroking down over cicatrices that were raised when, at his initiation, the cuts were made and filled with clay.

Now the didjeridoo-man has come in, and he sits down besides the songman. He stretches out one thin black leg and spreads his big toe wide from his other toes. He lifts the long tube of wood, the didjeridoo, and sets it in the fork of his toes. The end of the didjeridoo projects just beyond his rested foot and is about two and a half inches across, bigger than the other end which he raises to his mouth. The didjeridoo is wet, he has poured water down the hollow wooden tube to give it better tone. About a quarter of its length is painted red-black-red-black in narrow rings, the rest is unpainted wood, smooth from its use in many hands. They wait, the songman and the didjeridoo-man. They wait for the man with the ubar drum, the balnooknook, which has the sacred name of banagaga.

...the balnooknook-man looks at the songman and the didjeridoo-man, who wriggles his heel in the sand and settles the wooden tube more firmly in the fork of his toes. The songman shifts one rhythm stick to the other hand. The balnooknook-man raises the labait (drumstick) and begins to thump in slow

steady rhythm on the drum, kump, kump, kump, kump, kump...

The songman starts to chant and his sticks click time. The didjeridoo-man's lips are lost in his instrument, his cheeks and his chest rise and fall. The vibrant drone of the didjeridoo winds out and through the songman's chant and is punctuated with the kump, kump of the balnooknook.

They play for perhaps a quarter of an hour, filling the corroboree place with sound and spirit. Then the beat slows, the songman slows, the didjeridoo sound winds out more slowly...

Some of the songs are difficult to understand for the uninitiated, and sometimes also to the singer and audience. This is often because of the distance that the song has travelled, so being virtually a foreign language. Also, some of the songs are so ancient that the words have lost their meaning. In very sacred songs, the singer may also jumble accents and syllables too (R43).

Often, actual words are spoken down the didjeridu while it is played, and so some "words" and noises take on specific meanings, which could be sacred.

The didjeridu is more often used in open, non secret ceremonies. It is interesting to note that there is rarely, if at all, more than one didjeridu played in a ceremony. As well as open ceremonies, it is used at funerals and mourning ceremonies, clan songs, entertainment songs, individually owned songs, children's songs and initiations. It is often used in "stories" depicting the Dreamtime, and also to accompany songs about an individuals dreaming.

Perhaps one of the most important initiation ceremonies is the Djunggewon age grading ceremony (involving circumcision). This is based on the story of the Wauwelak sisters (mentioned earlier). The didjeridu is used in this ceremony, and represents Yurlunggur, the Rainbow Snake. This snake is said to be responsible for the initiation of boys to manhood, and also men into 'clevermen'.

The Djunggewon ceremony begins with a large didjeridu being made and then blown to signify the opening of the rites. The boys (novices) are taken

from the women to a sacred ground. The women wail at the loss of their sons. The didjeridu, being a sacred ritual object, is painted with designs from the Wauwelak myth, and decorated with hanging pendants. Some arm blood is drawn (representing the menstrual blood of the Wauwelak sisters), and the didjeridu is blown throughout this process. The blood is used as an adhesive for feather down decoration which accompanies the body painting on the boys and dancers. Some of the blood is offered to Yurlunggur to appease him. There are further rituals including a ceremony, where the novices 'sleep' in a sacred area near a hut. The didjeridu is carried from the hut by two stooping men, and is played by another man. The didjeridu is used to symbolise the swallowing of the novices, who are then 'spat out' and are considered spiritually reborn. The novices are said to be "sung dead" by the songman and didjeridu player. There is then a circumcision rite, followed by dancing. The boys are later taught the significance of the dances, the songs and the sacred words. To finish, the didjeridu is returned to a secret hiding place.

The didjeridu used in the Djunggewon ceremony, is often carved or painted with the myth of the Yurlunggur python. It is very large, ranging from around fifteen feet to almost twenty feet in length. The Yurlunggur didjeridu is also played in the cults of Kunapipi (the fertility mother who journeyed inland from the north coast). The deep sound represents the voice and power of the Rainbow Serpent and it is sometimes played lying down, with the huge didjeridu in a horizontal position supported just off the ground.

Some stories say that in certain ceremonies, Yurlunggur himself plays the didjeridu.

There is a myth about a ceremony where the didjeridu played a part, by accompanying the singing in the dance of some kangaroo men. The old kangaroo man picked up some click sticks and walked to where a lizard was hiding. The singing and the didjeridu stopped and the old kangaroo man played his sticks, making the lizard dance. Then, while an ubar drum was beaten, the old kangaroo man called the power names of many sacred dreamings. After he had finished, the ubar drum stopped and the men returned to their camp.

There are other ceremonies where the didjeridu is involved including, in some tribes, a girl's initiation into womanhood (R9). When she first experiences menstruation, she is secluded in a hut that has been built by her husband to be. She is looked after by her sisters or her future mother-in-law, and is washed, painted and decorated. After about three days, she is taken out and the hut is destroyed. Much care is taken to keep her away from any waterholes, to avoid attracting the Rainbow Snake. After further rituals, the girl is returned to camp, and this is marked with a ceremony of men singing, beating click sticks and playing the didjeridu. The girl has moved from childhood to the adult world.

When two individuals or two groups of people have a grievance with one another and need to settle the dispute, they use a procedure called a 'bugalub'. This restores the balance of the overall group. A hole in the ground is used to represent a sacred water hole. Songs are sung, accompanied by the didjeridu and click sticks. These songs are 'outside'/open versions of 'inside'/sacred songs. People sit around the hole, and those involved in the disagreement enter the hole, and sit in it. Water is then poured over them to heal the imbalance.

There is a death ceremony designed to rid the body and the tribe of evil spirits, 'wingmalung', that caused the death. The dead person's clothes are burnt and a ceremony is carried out involving the didjeridu to banish the spirits.

The didjeridu also appears to be used in ceremonies of love magic. Berndt describes this procedure (R9, p263):

Another technique (of love magic) makes use of a 'native horn',... possibly a species of drone pipe or didjeridu: the man holds it in the smoke of a fire during a special rite, charming it, and himself swallows some of the smoke; later on at the evening ceremony, when he blows the horn, the woman he wants is instantly attracted to him.

Most Aborigines view the didjeridu as a phallic symbol, and basically exclusive to male players. Although women are generally not allowed to play, they can participate in decorating a ceremonial didjeridu (unless it is for a sacred dance). Often, if

the didjeridu is used for a sacred ceremony, it will never be used again for another ceremony.

THE EFFECT OF THE DIDJERIDU ON SOME ANIMALS

According to Luling (R38), as well as the didjeridu being used in ceremonies, it can also be used in hunting. For example, to make an emu trap, the aborigines make a 'corridor' of netting and bushes. One end of the 'corridor' is open, and the other ends in bushes. A didjeridu is played behind the bush, imitating emu calls. The emu comes down the passageway, curious and attracted by the sound. It is then driven into the netting.

The emu is not the only animal to react to the didjeridu. Cats and dogs seem to have mixed reactions to the sound. Some animals seem frightened and run away, dogs often bark at it. Others are curious and seem happy to listen. Some are brave enough to approach the distal end of the didjeridu to find out where the noise is coming from.

Lawlor (R34, P291) reports that the didjeridu is also used to become more attuned to nature:

Traditionally, an Aborigine would go into nature and listen intensely to animal sounds, not just voices but also the flapping of wings or the thump of feet on the ground. The Aborigine would also listen to the sounds of wind, thunder, trees creaking and water running. The essences of all these sounds were played with as much accuracy as possible within the droning sound of the didjereedoo. For the Aborigine, the observation of nature immediately requires a state of empathy, which leads to an imitative expression.

It can be interesting playing the didjeridu in a natural setting, and trying to imitate any sounds you hear around you.

PART TWO

PLAYING THE DIDJERIDU

The didjeridu, like any other instrument can be learnt and played at almost any age. Aborigine children begin playing the didjeridu at an early age (some as young as four years old), and so have mastered the technique by adulthood. Some are better than others, and those that are excellent can play in ceremonies and often go on tours.

Sometimes the mouthpiece is too large for a child to play. This can be solved in various ways. For example, more beeswax can be added to the mouthpiece to make the internal diameter smaller. Alternatively, one can make a didjeridu with a smaller mouthpiece. An interesting idea that I have encountered is a small bamboo didjeridu for children, called a 'Kidjeridu'. One problem I found with this, is that because the instrument is so short, it doesn't sound much like a proper didjeridu.

As mentioned earlier, the Aborigines do not seem to like women playing the didjeridu. They may decorate it but not play it. There have been a few articles in the press recently of Aborigine outcry at women owning and playing didjeridus.

The Evening Standard newspaper (18.10.93) reported the following when the pop star Madonna was given a didjeridu by her Australian promoter:

"In the Aboriginal culture, women do not touch or play the didgeridoo. It is tribal law that the didgeridoo is only played by men," said Aboriginal elder Badangthun Munmunyarrun.

Another elder said: "The fact that Madonna is a Westerner and the didgeridoo was a gift does not change the fact that she should not be carrying it around."

I believe it is true that nearly all of the Aborigine players are male and I respect their views on the

matter. However, my own feeling (as a Westerner) is that the didjeridu is not a male exclusive instrument. I don't think that a didjeridu actually minds being played by females at all! Often people see the didjeridu as a 'masculine' thing because of its phallic symbolism. However, it not just phallic, it is also tubular. This indicates both masculine and feminine sexual aspects. The didjeridu is in effect, hermaphroditic, and will therefore lend itself to a player of either sex. It is often based on Yurlunggur, the Rainbow Snake, who represents both phallus and womb, so like the snake it is both male and female.

Another benefit to learning and playing the didjeridu is that it requires no musical knowledge. The sound of the didjeridu cannot be written down using the Western musical notation. Indeed, it could have a musical system of its own, which I believe Jones captures well in his article "The Didjeridu" (R30).

GETTING USED TO THE DIDJERIDU

When I play the didjeridu, it's an extension of me, an extension of my feelings - and I bring them out when I play.

Alan Dargin (R2M)

Before attempting to play the didjeridu, it is worth bearing in mind that when you do play, the didjeridu will just be an amplifier for what you are doing with your mouth, throat, voice etc. The didjeridu will basically become an extension of your mouth, and therefore a part of you. It is worth getting to know this new part of you. Treat it with respect.

Look at the instrument carefully. As you cast your gaze over it let your thoughts run free...

- Is there a pattern on it?
- What does the pattern mean to you (if anything)?
- Does this pattern tell its own story?

Feel the texture of the didjeridu. Try this with your eyes open and then closed. Grip the instrument and then relax your grip. Allow your thoughts and

touch to wander...

- Is the surface smooth/rough, warm/cold, hard/soft?
- Is there a particular way to hold it that 'feels right'?

Try tapping the side of the didjeridu with a finger or a stick. This can be used as a rhythm to play to. The didjeridu is simply a longer, narrower form of ubar (hollow log drum), that the Aborigines also use. Alternatively, you can 'palm' the end of the didjeridu, by gently 'slapping' the playing end with the palm of your hand.

If you sing notes down the didjeridu, you will find that some notes make the instrument vibrate. Try whistling down the didjeridu. If you whistle up or down a scale, you will notice that the didjeridu creates its own 'stepped' scale. It is quite an unusual scale which sometimes sounds like two people whistling slightly out of phase with one another.

Get used to the feel of the mouthpiece on your lips. Is the mouthpiece uncomfortable? If so, try adding beeswax to change the shape and smooth it out. Can you create a perfect seal? When you come to play your didjeridu, there must be no air escaping from the sides of your mouth. All the air should go down the didjeridu.

When you have a comfortable seal between your lips and the mouthpiece, try gently blowing air down the tube. This makes a sound like breezy weather. Without breaking the seal, breathe in through your nose and gently blow down again. You will notice if there is any air escaping elsewhere.

SOME NOTES TO BEAR IN MIND BEFORE YOU START

When you are starting, you will find that you can only breathe out for a few seconds whilst trying to get the right noise. When it comes to breathing in, breathe in with your nose rather than your mouth. There are various reasons for this. Firstly, it will get you used to breathing in through your nose for when you practice circular breathing later.

Secondly, it is easier to maintain your seal with the didjeridu. Thirdly, it avoids breathing in all the air that you have just blown out. The didjeridu will hold a certain amount of 'old' air in the tube. Breathing in through your mouth while keeping the seal entails breathing in the stale air. This may lead to feelings of dizziness.

If you do feel dizzy whilst practising, stop! Being dizzy means lack of oxygen to your brain. Your body needs oxygen. Give yourself time to breathe properly and to settle down before getting back to the didjeridu. If you find that you get dizzy very quickly, and that this dizziness won't go easily, consult your doctor.

You may find that you dribble down the didjeridu as you play. This is very common, and I have yet to hear of a solution to this. However, I certainly dribble a lot less now than I used to. Perhaps dribbling decreases with experience!

You may find, on the other hand, that your mouth goes dry. This seems to increase the need to swallow, which can interrupt play. I personally have only experienced a dry mouth when playing on stage, in front of an audience. This is probably due to nerves however, and not to do with the didjeridu playing itself. One way to try and get your mouth wet again is to think of biting into a lemon. A dry mouth is often a sign of fear (along with cold sweat, dizziness, increased heart beat, sick feeling, trembling etc.). If you do get a dry mouth with dizziness then stop.

If you are troubled by involuntary swallowing whilst playing, this can be annoying. As mentioned above, swallowing tends to cut off the flow of air, and therefore the sound. This can be dealt with in a couple of ways. If you know that you are needing to swallow, you can make a pattern in your play which involves pauses in play. You can then slip a voluntary swallow into a pause. Alternatively, it is possible to swallow and keep the sound going, but it takes practise. This can be done by filling your mouth with air and pushing the air out with your cheeks and tongue as you swallow voluntarily. This is similar to circular breathing, but swallowing instead of breathing in. You may also find that you are gripping the didjeridu very tightly. It is important to realise when you are

doing this, so that you can consciously relax. It is common for us to tense up when we are learning a new skill. It seems to happen unconsciously and automatically. Becoming aware of your tight grip allows you to relax your grip and your whole self. It is true to say that the best results when playing the didjeridu, come from the relaxed state.

When you begin to play, you may find that your lips (and possibly teeth) feel tingly, due to the vibration. They may even feel a little numb when you stop playing. This phenomena will pass as your lips get used to vibrating. I only get tingling lips now if I play for twenty minutes or more without stopping. You may also find that you get a red circular mark on your lips from the mouthpiece. This will happen no matter how much experience you have. Make sure you give your lips rest every so often. I know someone who made his lips bleed through playing too long and too often over a short period of time.

MAKING A GOOD NOISE

It is important to make sure that you have a good airtight seal between your lips and the didjeridu mouthpiece, otherwise you will be losing air that should be going down the inside of the didjeridu.

Some people find making the initial, fundamental sound easy and they get it straight away. Others find it more difficult to get the right sound. The good noise comes from a combination of the speed of the air coming out of your mouth, and the frequency of the vibration of your lips.

Your lips need to vibrate as they act as a kind of reed. Try making a raspberry type noise with your lips (not your tongue) by making a loose lipped sound like a horse.

Allow your lips to go floppy and blow down the tube. Explore the sounds you can make by altering the tension of your lips. See what sort of noise you get with them tight and with them loose. Let your lips get the feel of the didjeridu.

You could try pretending you have something on the tip of your tongue that you are trying to spit away. This can give you an initial burst of air that may get the fundamental note going.

Blow down the tube gently and build up to blowing harder. See how that changes the sound you make. Then go from hard blowing to softer.

You may find that when you blow hard and your lips are tight, you get a tooting sound like a trumpet. This frequency is used by some of the Aborigines along with the fundamental (droning sound). Some skilled players can get two or three higher 'toots' from the didjeridu. Most didjeridus can make two higher 'toots', and the occasional one allows a third. People who play brass instruments (e.g.. trumpet) may find these easy to reach.

Another method of finding the fundamental is to blow down the instrument and keep going until you totally run out of air. Sometimes, you get the fundamental sound at the end of your breath. This is because the air flow slows down and your lips also slow a little. It is also worth experimenting with which part of the mouth makes the better sound. Some people find playing from the front of the lips is easier, whilst others find that it is better to play slightly off center to the left or to the right.

You will know when you get a good noise because it will suddenly sound like a 'real' didjeridu being played. The instrument will vibrate (a little) in a different way, and you may intuitively know that you have got it.

Once you do achieve a good noise, you should find it easier and easier to get that noise again. Once your unconscious knows what sound you are trying to achieve, it will tune into it quicker and quicker until it has learnt one hundred percent how to get the right noise. It is like riding a bicycle - it takes practise, but once you have got the hang of it, you should never lose it again.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF SOUND

As you get more experienced at playing the didjeridu, you will find that you are able to play for longer periods of time between breaths. This allows you to experiment further with respects to improving the quality of the sound you make.

Whilst playing, you may find that sometimes the sound that you get is 'crisper' than at other times. Alternatively you may find that you get an 'airy'

sound quality, where the basic sound is there, but it is accompanied by a 'breezy' blowing noise. This airy sound will eventually become crisper and crisper as you practise over time.

This 'crispness' in sound is partly due to the player and partly due to the didjeridu. For example, a metal pipe will tend to be crisper than a cardboard tube, and a wooden didjeridu will be crisper than a giant hogweed stem.

There are various methods of helping make the sound crisper:

Pouring water down or soaking a wooden/bamboo didjeridu before playing. This is something that the Aborigines do as they claim it improves the quality of sound. Apparently, a tribe of pigmies from Zaire (who play a metal didjeridu in the same way as the Aborigines), still pour water down the metal pipe, apparently as part of the ritual. This may be a carry over from a time when they played wooden pipes. I believe that the Aborigines could have 'discovered' this idea when trying to clear the termites out of a eucalyptus branch with water, and then finding the sound to be of a superior nature. With bamboo, on the other hand, it could have been 'discovered' by pouring water down the tube to cool or extinguish the burning membranes. (Hot coals were sometimes used to burn through the membranes which separate the nodes of the bamboo. This may have caused the inside of the bamboo to catch alight. Water would be the obvious solution to this problem.)

Trying the didjeridu in different positions around the mouth.

It is possible to play the didjeridu with the front of your mouth or off centre to the left or to the right. This must be experimented with. You may find that slightly off centre is better, or you may find that you are almost playing from the corner of your mouth. Some Aborigines play from the side of the mouth, whereas others play central. There is no right or wrong with this, it is simply a case of what sounds and feels best for you. I have found that playing from the side is much better for me, though most people I know have not been able to learn that way. I started playing from the front, and then while experimenting found that the right side

produced a much clearer sound. I also find that I have more control over different playing techniques from the side. It is actually possible to play two didjeridus at the same time, one from each corner of the mouth. I have demonstrated this on numerous occasions with two cardboard tubes.

Twisting the didjeridu round a little while playing, causing the lips to twist as well.

Sometimes, this can produce a slightly better sound, though I am not sure how good it is for you lips if done for a long period of time!! If you have a beard or moustache and your didjeridu has a beeswax mouthpiece, you may find that you are waxing your facial hair into a circular pattern. This pattern will remain until brushed or washed out! (A mouthpiece of paraffin wax and beeswax mixed gives a slightly harder finish which solves the beard/moustache problem.)

Making a 'tooting' trumpet noise.

If you blow down the didjeridu quite forcefully with tight lips, you may get a trumpet like noise. After 'tooting' for a while, you should find that the crispness of sound is improved. This is perhaps because the 'tooting' loosens up subtle muscles in the mouth which allow the change in sound. Another method along the same lines is rolling your 'r's whilst making the fundamental sound.

Although it seems obvious, the best way to improve the sound is to advance your skills. This can only be done with practise and exploration. You can read about playing the didjeridu and this can give you knowledge. However, there is no better way to increase your experience than getting on down and doing it.

When you play the didjeridu, it is not meant to be hard work. You are playing and not working. Let the little kid inside of you come out and play. Playing is about exploring and having fun. The best way to learn is to play. When you practice, improvise with sounds, mix the patterns that you find.

Another part of playing the didjeridu is relaxing. You may find that you are tensing up while playing, and it is good to notice when you are doing this. Stop playing for a few moments and start again, loosen your grip on the didjeridu (if

your grip is tight). The didjeridu is very relaxing to play once you have got the hang of it. If you feel frustrated as you practise, persevere! The best results tend to occur when you are relaxed.

Become aware of what your mouth and tongue are doing as you play. This may be off-putting at first, but it can lead to some insights and improvements in play. It is important to remember that your mouth is a part of the instrument. The tube is really just an amplifier to your mouth. This is similar to the Jews Harp, where different sounds are made by the shaping of the mouth and amplified by the 'twanging' of the harp.

Obviously, the sound from the didjeridu comes out of the distal end. This means that the sound is not only travelling away from you but it is perhaps five feet away to start with. A problem that players often have is not being able to hear the sounds they make properly. This can make it harder to improve the quality of play. Here are a few suggestions to remedy this situation:

- Holding a second didjeridu from the distal end of the first (playing) didjeridu to your ear will allow you to hear more precisely what you are sounding like.
- Some Aborigines use a large shell (e.g.. a bailer shell), a hole in the ground or a mound of sand/earth to reflect the sound back to them.
- Alternatively, you can use a box, a bucket, an empty bath, an empty sink, a large tin or a big mixing bowl.
- A corner of a room or a wall can also be effective to bounce the sound off.
- It is worth remembering that the sound of the didjeridu will reflect better off solid, hard surfaces. If you play with the instrument resting on the carpet, some of the sound will be absorbed. If this is the case, put the distal end on a large hardbacked book or a piece of wood or glass.
- Playing into a microphone (e.g.. a PZM flat mike) attached to an amplifier and speakers. If using a reverb (or echo), the sound can be quite extraordinary.

CIRCULAR BREATHING

Circular breathing is almost unique to the

Aborigines, though I believe that the Tibetan Buddhists use it in meditation and (according to Roberts - R50) some form of it is also used by glass-blowers. It can also be used to some extent with instruments like the trumpet, saxophone, and oboe.

Circular breathing is used to maintain a constant outflow of air from the mouth. This unbroken flow of air allows the player to keep the didjeridu playing indefinitely. Indeed, it could be said that didjeridu playing without circular breathing isn't true didjeridu playing.

It is often thought of as a difficult skill to learn, though in truth, it is quite simple. The term "circular breathing" suggests that air is being breathed in and breathed out at the same time. This is not the case. Air is being breathed in through the nose and squeezed out through the mouth at the same moment. The only difficulty comes with co-ordination. It is a bit like patting your head and rubbing your tummy at the same time. It is a new skill which may need to be learnt.

Before attempting circular breathing, it is worth practising the following:

- As mentioned earlier, it is a good idea to keep an airtight seal between your lips and the didjeridu all the time that you are playing. When you run out of air and need to take in a new breath, breathe in through your nose, not your mouth. Get used to pulling air in through your nose as this is vital to circular breathing.
- You should find that the more you practise, the longer you can sustain the fundamental note with one breath. You may find that you can play for over 30 seconds
- before needing to breathe in. It is a good idea to be able to play for at least five to ten seconds before learning circular breathing. This gives you more time to be relaxed about the circular breathing instead of trying to do it in a panic every two seconds.

Perhaps the term 'circular breathing' is rather misleading. It may be better called 'constant breath' or 'perpetual blowing'. One way of describing the procedure of circular breathing is as follows:

- 1) You can breathe in and out through your nose. If you have a problem with your olfactory

system which prevents you breathing in through your nose, then you will find circular breathing basically impossible. It should be a natural process, as you unconsciously block the back of your mouth with your tongue.

- 2) Puff your cheeks out as if you had a mouth full of custard (or chocolate sauce if you prefer). You can still breathe in and out through your nose as your cheeks remain puffed out. Again, this is a natural process which allows us to eat/chew food and breathe at the same time.
- 3) Whilst keeping your mouth blocked and your cheeks puffed out, squash the air out of your mouth with your hands (making a 'raspberry' sound).
- 4) Fill your mouth up again, so that your cheeks are almost bursting. This time, as you squash the air out of your mouth with your hands, breathe in through your nose at that same moment. Once you can do this, you are, in effect, circular breathing. Well done!
- 5) Fill your mouth once more. This time, use your cheek muscles to squash the air out, as you breathe in through your nose at the same moment. You may also find that your jaw pulls up as well as your cheeks moving in.
- 6) The final step is to keep a constant flow of air going. Say the word 'wa'. Notice what shape your mouth is at the initial 'w' part. Keep your mouth in this 'w' shape for the following:
 - a) Breathe in through your nose.
 - b) Breathe slowly out through your mouth.
 - c) As you approach the end of your breath, quickly block the back of your mouth with back of your tongue (as you would do if you had a mouthful of custard and wanted to breath through your nose).
 - d) Push the air out of your mouth whilst snatching air in through your nose.
 - e) Quickly unblock the back of your mouth.
 - f) Breathe slowly out of your mouth.
 - g) Return to (c) and continue.

Once perfected, this procedure should become easier and easier.

You may find that at first, you are not pulling

enough air in through your nose, and that your lungs are not receiving enough oxygen. Do not despair, the amount you can take in gets more and more as you continue to practise.

It is a good idea to try and keep at least fifty percent of the air in your lungs, rather than waiting for the last moment to breathe in.

You may also find that you are 'snorting' in too hard and it makes your inner ears hurt. The best advice to overcome this is: Take it easy!

Another way of looking at the concept of breathing air in and 'pushing' air out is to fill your mouth with water. Breathe in while pushing the water out of your mouth. This is best done over a sink.

A method of seeing the effects of circular breathing is to put a straw in water and 'perpetually blow' through the straw. You can see the air bubbling constantly through the water. This takes less air pressure and lets you know if you have got the principle of circular breathing right.

It is possible to learn the skill of circular breathing before playing a didjeridu - I used to practise while driving in my car. You then have the challenge of combining this skill with actually playing the didjeridu.

WHERE TO PLAY YOUR DIDJERIDU

When you are learning to play the didjeridu, you may find that the sound you are getting is like that of a vacuum cleaner! The noise can carry quite a long way, and although I have never been troubled by neighbours, it is a good idea to keep them in mind. You may want to find a private place to practise.

Once the instrument is mastered, there seem to be very few people who actually object to the sound. Most people find it pleasant and sometimes moving.

If playing in a band, the rest of the band will have to play around the key of the didjeridu, otherwise it may sound out of place. This is also true of two or more didjeridu players. It is best if the didjeridus are in the same key, as this avoids a discord.

It is often enjoyable to find a particular location to

play. Here are a few ideas:

Places with good acoustics:

- Subways
- Underground tube stations (avoid busking)
- Caves
- Buildings/rooms with bare stone walls, floor and ceiling
- Large halls
- Other echoing rooms

Sacred/Mystical sites:

- Ancient ruins
- Quiet chapels/abbeys
- Stone circles

Places of natural beauty:

- Beaches, accompanied by the sound of the sea
- River banks
- Fields (sitting under an old oak tree)
- Woods/forests
- Hilltops
- Moors
- A quiet lake at night

Other places:

- Rooftops
- Indoor shopping complexes
- Lifts

TECHNIQUES OF PLAY

The didjeridu is possibly unique in its variety of sounds and play. It is unlike any western musical instrument and is therefore difficult to write down in the traditional musical notation. I would also suggest that the didjeridu is one instrument that synthesisers will never be able to imitate. Because the sound is not on a scale, there would have to be many samples taken to achieve anything resembling the true nature of the didjeridu.

Every player has a different style of play. There are no rights or wrongs when playing. There is no one, single way to play. Of course, some players may sound better than others, but this is usually because they have been playing longer, or have had more practise.

Before Starting

Attaining the fundamental note/tone is really just the first step. It is best to get a degree of 'crispness' in the quality of sound before attempting to get the variety of sound possible with the instrument. Getting the 'crisp' quality (discussed earlier), involves a sound which is tighter and clearer, as opposed to a loose airy rasp. One method of achieving 'crispness' is to play from the side of the mouth as opposed to the front.

Once attaining the 'crispness' it is then easier to adjust the timbre and then concentrate on the rhythm of your play (if you choose to use rhythm!).

An Exercise

This exercise will give you an idea of some of the sounds that can be brought together into patterns. Allow yourself to play with the sounds you get.

While playing the fundamental note, try going through the alphabet, spending time on each letter. This can be done using the voice, or just by mouthing the letters.

Start with going through:

ay, ay, ay, ay...

bee, bee, bee, bee...

see, see, see, see...

dee, dee, dee, dee... etc.

Which letters sound good? Which letters are hard to use?

Try speeding up the repetition of the letters or slowing it down.

Next go through the alphabet again, but this time using the letters as if they were parts of words:

a, a, a, a... (as in 'a-ction')

b, b, b, b... (as in 'b-anana')

c, c, c, c... (as in 'c-elery') etc.

As you go through the alphabet, become aware of what your mouth and tongue are doing.

With some of the consonants, it is possible to put vowel sounds and combinations after. For example,

with the letter 'L':

la-la-la, le-le-le, li-li-li,
lo-lo-lo, lu-lu-lu...
lay-lay-lay, lair-lair-lair,
law-law-law, lee-lee-lee,
lear-lear-lear, loo-loo-loo,
low-low-low (as in 'plough'),
loy-loy-loy-loy.

Try speaking actual words, with or without your voice, while playing the fundamental. For example "Hello" or "I love you". If you use your voice, you could sound it deeply or at a higher pitch. Alternatively, you can slide up and down with the pitch of your voice. For example, going from high to low while saying/shouting "Oi you", produces a nice effect.

When speaking/shouting down the didjeridu, you may find certain letters difficult to use. The letter 'M' is an example of this. In order to say "em", you have to close your lips together, which shuts off the flow of air. Others letters that do this are 'B', 'P', 'T'.

MAKING DIFFERENT SOUNDS

When playing the didjeridu, it is worth remembering that the sounds you make are dependent almost entirely on your mouth. The didjeridu is really an amplifier or megaphone. So, it's what you do with your mouth that counts!!

The basic parts of the mouth that can be used are discussed separately. These include the tongue, lips, cheeks, voice, jaw, breath, back of the mouth.

The Tongue

- Blocking:** Stick the tip of your tongue between your teeth and into the airhole, thereby blocking the flow of air. This can be used to create a rhythm.
- Raspberry:** Stick the tip of your tongue between your teeth, as if saying 'th'. By moving the tongue forward or backward slightly, you can gain different degrees of rasping.
- Sweep:** This can be achieved through various methods.
 - Run tip of tongue along the back of your top teeth, or along the top end of your back

teeth. This can be done slowly or quickly.

- Run tip of tongue from back of mouth to back of teeth across the soft palate.
- Rolling 'r':** This is rapid vibration of the front of the tongue at the front of the mouth (just behind the back of the top teeth). It is used by children when making a machine gun noise, and is often thought of as a Scottish 'R'. When used with the didjeridu, it creates a fast drum roll effect.
- Squelch:** By bringing the tongue up quickly, it forces air out of the mouth, and temporarily shuts off the fundamental. It can be a good way to finish a piece. By saying "hwit" or "hweet", you should get this effect. It creates a wet squelching effect.
- Ye-ye-ye:** Use your tongue as if you were saying the words "ye-ye-ye-ye-" over and over again. This can be done slowly, or quickly which gives a kind of springing 'boing' effect.
- The Scale:** Without the didjeridu, whistle up and down the musical scale as high and low as you can go. Notice what your tongue is doing as you whistle. This can be repeated with the didjeridu, and you will find that you can create a kind of musical scale, and therefore some loose 'tunes'. It is possible to take the fundamental up a whole tone.
- Dip:** By dipping the middle of the tongue down, you can create a lower tone.
- Whok:** Mouthing the word "wok"/"whok", creates a traditional sound that can be used in rhythms or on its own. It can also be enhanced by puffing the cheeks out whilst 'whokking'.
- Ke-ke-ke:** When the phrase 'ke-ke-ke-' is mixed with a high pitch shriek, you have an animal/bird type cry.
- We-are:** Mouthing the word "we-are" can create a siren type sound. By speeding this up and repeating it, you get more of a 'weoweoweo' sound.
- The Alphabet:** From the above exercise, you may have found your own noises and sounds that you like. It is simply a case of exploring.

The Lips

- Tightness:** By adjusting the tightness of the lips ever so slightly, you can make the sound of the

didjeridu crisper and clearer. Also, if this subtle tightening/loosening of lips is combined with the tongue (using the scale), the melody/tune can be improved.

- ❑ **Tooting:** It is possible to get two (and in some didjeridus three) overtones above the fundamental drone. The way to achieve this tooting is to make your lips tight and then blow with a harder wind pressure, as if you were blowing a trumpet. The toot can be alternated with the fundamental, being used as a form of rhythm or effect. This is perhaps one of the most difficult of effects to achieve, as Jones reports:

...an exceptionally skilful technique is employed whereby the upper note is lightly and briefly 'spat' in rapid alteration with the fundamental. This procedure is so neatly carried out that the fundamental appears to continue unbroken during these attacks on the upper note. This aural illusion is difficult to explain and almost impossible to emulate, and the exact physical manipulation that achieves it has so far defied analysis. It remains the most baffling and elusive aspect of didjeridu technique. (R31, p270)

Whilst sustaining a toot, it is possible to roll 'R's, and make some of the sounds usually made whilst playing the fundamental. It is also possible to circular breath whilst tooting, though this may take practise.

The Cheeks

- ❑ **Cavity:** Adjusting the size of the mouth cavity, can produce different effects. Puffing the cheeks out creates a deeper sound and bringing the cheeks in produces a 'reedy' sound. It is possible to combine the puffing of cheeks with other techniques, giving even wider variation. For example, try moving your cheeks in and out whilst mouthing "look-a-look-a-look-a".
- ❑ **Tapping:** An excellent rhythm can be produced by tapping your cheek while you are playing. This can sometimes be hard to combine with breathing, when first learning to circular breathe, but will become easier with practise.

The Voice

- ❑ **Singing Notes:** Try singing up and/or down the scale. Certain notes will reverberate with the didjeridu and sound clear. Other notes will vibrate against the sound of the didjeridu and will waver. Humming/singing up/down the scale will demonstrate the sound wave interference by creating beats.
- ❑ **Screaming/Screeching:** The screams are usually higher pitch and can be sustained or yelped.
- ❑ **Grunting:** This is a deep, loud caveman type noise.
- ❑ **Speaking:** Rather than simply mouthing words, you can say them (or sing them). Explore different pitches of your voice.
- ❑ **Sliding Down:** By quickly sliding your voice from high to low, you can get a kind of whale type sound.
- ❑ **Animal Sounds:** It is possible to make a variety of animal noises, including the whale, elephant, dog, cow, sheep, pigeon. The Aborigines also have the kookaburra, dingo, blowfly, crickets, bullfrog, crow, emu, raven, lizard and kangaroo (jumping sounds).
- ❑ **Other Sounds:** Aborigines also use the didjeridu to imitate cars, lorries, tractors, aeroplanes, helicopters, marching, military drums and boomerangs.

The Jaw

- ❑ **Booming:** by lowering the jaw bone, you get a deeper sound. This can accompany the puffing out of the cheeks.

The Breath

- ❑ **Volume:** The harder you blow/breath out, the louder the sound will be. Obviously, the reverse is also true... breath gentler, sound softer.
- ❑ **Diaphragm 'Vibrato':** When breathing out, instead of keeping a constant out-breath, allow yourself to 'step' the breath, so creating a hard-soft-hard-soft- pattern. The spaces between the harder breaths can be lengthened or shortened. If the gap is lengthened, it gives the appearance that you are slowing down your play. This can be a good place to finish a piece.

The Back of the Mouth

- ❑ Gurgling: This technique could also be termed growling, or pharyngeal croaking. This is the sound you make when you are gargling or clearing your throat. When used whilst playing the didjeridu, it can sound similar to the rapid tongue vibration (rolling 'R's). This gurgling can be accompanied by the voice.

COMBINATIONS AND PATTERNS

It is good to combine different techniques whilst playing, for example, mixing the voice with the 'th' sound or combining the singing/humming scale with the lip/tongue scale. It is a time for exploration. Find out for yourself which combinations sound good for you, and which don't.

It may be that when you play, you play on a random basis of whatever comes into your mind, or whatever comes out of your mouth at any one moment in time. Even then, you may find yourself working with patterns of play.

Patterns usually entail some kind of rhythm, and often involve the constant drone of the intake of air whilst circular breathing.

It could be said that there are sounds, minor patterns, major patterns and the piece. A sound is a single technique, perhaps one of those listed above. A minor pattern is a mix of two or three sounds, which come together and are repeated in the same combination a few times throughout a piece. A major pattern is a collection of minor patterns, which are themselves repeated in the same combination a few times. The piece is the collection of sounds and patterns.

An example of some minor patterns:

- R-r-r rickatee diddleo diddleo (where R-r-r = Rolling Rs)
- R-r-r-r ruckatoo diddleo 'Toot' 'Toot'
- (High pitch): K-k-k-k-k-k-k -Ay -O
- CB HB-HB-HB-HB (CB=circular breath, HB=hard breath)
- Doi diddy doi diddy CB 'High pitch screech'

An example of a major pattern would be any of the above patterns repeated over a few times.

ABORIGINE STYLES OF PLAYING THE DIDJERIDU

The main area of didjeridu playing in Australia is in the Northern Territories, especially in Arnhemland. The Aborigines of this area each have different styles of play. Each individual will have their own subtle variation, and different clans again will have their own variations. However, there is a distinct difference between the styles of West and East Arnhem Aborigines.

The West tend to hold the didjeridu with two hands, with the distal end resting on a foot. Their style of play is generally slower, more 'dronery' and lazier.

The East (particularly the North East), however, tend to hold the didjeridu with one hand, which is used in support. They use a much faster and energetic style of play, which carries a definite rhythm. They also use the 'toot' sound as part of their rhythms. The 'toot' is usually absent in the West.

PART THREE

STRUCTURE OF THE DIDJERIDU

In order to enhance your play, it is worth learning something about what makes a didjeridu 'do'. This chapter looks at the shape and size of the didjeridu, what it can be made of, how it can be made and a guide to maintenance. There is also a section on why the didjeridu makes the noise it does.

SHAPES AND SIZES

The basic shape of the didjeridu is tubular. However, it is often slightly conical, where the proximal end (ie. the end that is blown) has a smaller diameter than the distal end (the other end). The proximal end is usually between 1.25 inches and 1.5 inches in diameter. If the hollow diameter of the mouthpiece is much larger or much smaller, the didjeridu becomes difficult, if not impossible, to play. Having said this, on some of the larger Aborigine didjeridus, the mouthpieces can be up to 2 inches in diameter.

The didjeridu is unlike most other wind instruments because it has no reed (as in clarinets etc.), or finger holes (as in flutes etc.) or fipple (the 'airhole' that gives the recorder, flute, whistle it's noise - it is also noticeable on the pipes above a church organ). It also has a very basic mouthpiece, which can either be the bare wood, bamboo etc., or for example, beeswax which is moulded to the proximal end to make play easier. This is unlike any brass wind instrument which has a small backward cone mouthpiece.

The length of the didjeridu can vary greatly. As mentioned earlier, some can be up to perhaps twenty or so feet in length (and these can be called 'Yurlunggurs' as they represent the Rainbow Snake). The average length however is between 3.5 feet and 6 feet. As the didjeridu gets longer or smaller than these average lengths, it can become

more difficult to play. Indeed the Yurlunggurs must be very hard to play, due to the great length and large mouthpiece.

Using a 'Didjeribone' (an adjustable didjeridu created by the author and discussed later in this chapter), it has been found that for one particular instrument (with a mouthpiece and internal diameter of 1.35 inches), the greatest length by which it could still be played easily was 84 inches (7 feet). However, at around 69 inches (5 feet 9 inches) or more, there had to be a looser lipped approach, otherwise, it would not play. Again, beyond 7 feet, the lip movement became even slower.

Going in the opposite direction, it was found that with a didjeridu of about 27 inches (2 feet 3 inches) was about the shortest that could be played - while making any kind of noise resembling the didjeridu. It should be noted that around 36 inches (3 feet) and smaller, there had to be a tighter lipped approach.

It is interesting that beyond a certain length (either shorter or longer), the didjeridu has to be played with a slightly different lip tension in order to maintain a reasonable, fundamental sound.

It is also important to note that the lowest tone that a didjeridu can be heard at is about 70 to 100 Mhz (R28). The sound of the didjeridu tends to get lower as the didjeridu gets longer. The Yurlunggurs which are sometimes up to twenty feet long produce a deep rumbling/clicking sound.

As well as the pitch being affected by the length of the didjeridu, it is also affected by the size of the internal diameter (the bore) and the thickness of the walls. Also, the quality of the actual sound is altered by the material from which the instrument is made. Some materials can absorb some of the sound, making it less 'crisp'.

WHAT CAN A DIDJERIDU BE MADE OF?

A didjeridu is generally thought of as either made of wood or bamboo. However, there are various other types of material that the didjeridu can be made of. Below is a list of different types:

- ❑ **Eucalyptus:** According to Jones (R32), this includes the stringybark (*Euc. tetrodonta*), the iron bark (*Erythrophlaem laboucheii*), the woollybutt (*Euc. miniata*) and the red river gum (*Euc. camaldulensis*). Some of the eucalyptus is known as 'bloodwood' due to its red sap. Most of the traditional Aborigine didjeridus imported to England are made of eucalyptus. It is interesting to note that according to aromatherapist, Christine Westwood (R59), eucalyptus oil is used mainly in treating the respiratory system. It is apparently helpful for such ailments as colds, asthma, congestion and bronchitis. This is perhaps useful in breathing whilst playing the instrument. Eucalyptus oil is also a powerful antiseptic. It is hardly surprising that the didjeridu is sometimes used by the Aborigine 'witch-doctors' (or 'clevermen') for healing purposes.
- ❑ **Bamboo:** Used by the Aborigines. It is also used in England and is usually cheaper than the wood. It is also lighter, and produces a 'hollower' sound - this may be due to the thin walls and largely empty interior. Because it is lighter, it is easier to carry about. However, it is prone to splitting and must be transported carefully. Etheridge (in R28) claims that the bamboo didjeridus that he saw in the late nineteenth century were of the species *bambusa arnhemica*.
- ❑ **Palm:** According to Moyle (R42) a didjeridu that she knew of was made from palm (*Livistonia humilis*).
- ❑ **Hibiscus:** According to Reed (R47) the bark of the hibiscus stem is occasionally used as a temporary instrument.
- ❑ **Cactus:** In America, cacti are used for didjeridus. They are called 'Dreaming Logs' (R5). They are also lightweight and apparently have 'excellent tonal qualities'.
- ❑ **Wood:** The didjeridu can actually be made out of any wood (as long as the diameter is wide enough). English 'home-made' didjeridus are usually made of softwood as they are easier to work with.
- ❑ **Clay:** According to Aubin and Farrenden (R8), there is a craftswoman in England who makes ornate clay didjeridus. They apparently have a deep reverberating sound but are obviously

extremely fragile.

- ❑ **Metal:** The metal pipes make a good crisp sound as they are not absorbent. They are, however, heavier (unless one uses thin aluminium) and prone to rust. The Aborigines have recently taken to playing exhaust pipes/tail pipes of trucks, land rovers and other cars.
- ❑ **Plastic:** This can be thin drain/plumbing piping. It has the advantage of being inexpensive and good for practising. The sound is not as 'earthy' as the wooden didjeridus, but it is not a bad substitute.
- ❑ **Cardboard:** A good method to practise. One should be able to pick these up for free. Some of the cardboard tubes produce a reasonable sound although others sound very limp and ineffective.
- ❑ **Imagination:** There are many items around that are hollow and playable. Any tube with a diameter of around 1.25 to 1.5 inches and a length of over 2 feet 6 inches can be used. A vacuum cleaner sometimes has a long metal tube and/or a flexible ribbed plastic tube which can be played. Indeed, an advantage of a flexible tube is that it can be twisted round to face the player, so that one can hear what one is playing!

HOW IS A DIDJERIDU MADE?

This question can be answered in two ways, from the point of view of the Aborigine, or from the point of view of maker of home made didjeridus.

The Aborigines make their didjeridus chiefly out of eucalyptus or bamboo. The techniques for preparation are different. Let us look at the eucalyptus first.

Eucalyptus

These didjeridus are made from the hollow branches which are either broken off the tree, or are felled naturally and are therefore simply picked up from the ground.

The branches become hollow through having their core eaten out by termites (white ants of the order Isoptera). These insects remain under the surface of the wood, as they do not like the sunlight. The branches seem to be hollowed out in various ways. One way is where the termites nest in malformed compact branches and eat the centre first, then move outwards towards the bark. A second way is where the white ants hatch from eggs under the bark of the tree, head in towards the centre of the branch and then eat it out. A third way is where the termites make mounds around the base of a tree, and hollow out the trunk and branches. The branches may then fall off.

It is obviously crucial that the branch must be 'rescued' at the right time. Otherwise there will be a didjeridu with a bore that is too small. The best way to find out if the branch is hollow and ready is to tap it with a stick or a stone. Once an Aborigine has found his hollowed branch, it may take him a couple of hours to turn it into a playable and decorated instrument.

He must first get rid of the termites. This can be done with a pointed stick jiggled about in the tube to dislodge the insects. Another alternative is banging the didjeridu on a rock, so as to knock the termites out, and shake them loose. He may use a 'firestick' (literally a burning stick), to dislodge and burn the termites out. Pouring water down the didjeridu is also a good way of getting rid of the insects, by drowning them and washing them away. Finally, he could blow them out. It is my thought that this is the most probable way that the playing of the didjeridu was 'invented'. I believe that the sound was possibly discovered by an Aborigine who just happened to be trying to get termites out of a hollow log/branch, possibly to use it as an ubar drum. He blew down it to clear it and found that it made a fascinating noise.

Once the termites and loose wood have been cleared, the outer bark is then stripped. This would have originally been done with sharp stones, but today would probably be done with a knife of some sort. Depending on the thickness of the didjeridu, the ends may be thinned down a little, especially the proximal playing end.

The mouthpiece, if necessary, is then created and

built onto the proximal playing end. The reason for the mouthpiece is either to make the instrument more comfortable to play, or to make the proximal diameter smaller and therefore easier to play. The mouthpiece can be made of beeswax, clay or eucalyptus gum. The beeswax is left in the sun to go soft, and it is then moulded and built onto the didjeridu. Clay, if used, is also built on. The eucalyptus gum is administered and then left to harden. The didjeridu is then decorated in some way. It may be painted with ochre and clay. The ochre ranges in colour from light yellow, to orange, to red to dark brown. The decoration is often simply rings around the didjeridu, or more complex drawings, perhaps of clan symbols. The method of painting is similar to that done on bark paintings.

Bamboo

According to Etheridge (in R42), the bamboo plants (*bambusa arhemica*) can grow up to eighty feet in height. This means that there must be at least one good didjeridu (of five to six feet) in the hugely tall plant.

The bamboo tube is naturally split up into segments, with a membrane dividing each segment. Obviously, these need to be removed in order to obtain a sound from the tube. The membranes can be removed in various different ways. For example, they can be removed by dropping hot or burning coals down the tube, or by poking a firestick down and burning the dividers. Alternatively, the membranes could be removed by being knocked out by a rod or strong stick.

Obviously, bamboo didjeridus can be 'home-made'. It is possible to buy lengths of bamboo for a reasonable price. One should check, however, that there are no cracks all the way through it and that it is suitable for play.

The bamboo can then be carefully sawn down to size, and the membranes can be removed with a metal rod. Note that if the internal diameter of the tube is larger than one and a half inches, it is worth leaving a bit of membrane at the playing end, to make a smaller playing diameter. Therefore, instead of knocking the complete membrane out, one leaves a 'lip' all the way round. The lip can be filed to the right size.

With regard to other methods of preparing 'home-made' didjeridus, some examples are given below.

Wood

Although it is often tempting to take a branch straight off a tree, I would not advise it. There is plenty of freshly fallen wood on the ground. If you cannot find any, contact a local forestry commission and see if you can locate some branches that they have cleared from a site.

It is probably best to get some softer wood, perhaps pine or ash. These are easier to work with. Most wood will sound good though.

Although traditional didjeridus are fairly straight in nature with the odd kink, they can actually be very twisted and curved, and still produce a good sound.

Once you have found a piece of wood of the right dimensions (with an external diameter of around two to three inches), it must then be checked for rot. If the wood has been on the ground for a long period of time, it is most likely useless. However if it has fallen recently, it may be okay.

Another thing to be aware of is that the wood may be wet. This depends on how long the branch has been on the ground, and also how wet or dry the weather has been. Wet wood is heavier and takes a long time to dry out.

Whilst drying the wood, you need to leave the bark on as this prevents the wood from splitting.

If you are air drying the wood, it is obviously necessary to keep it in a dry place, for example: a garage, shed, airing cupboard, under the stairs or an attic.

There are various ways of drying wood more quickly than air drying. Kiln dried wood is one alternative, but can be expensive unless you know someone with a drying kiln who will give you some space for your wood.

Once the wood is dry, the bark can be stripped and the branch can be tidied up. If there are any twigs or knots, they can be removed, so that the surface is how you want it.

If you want to get a decent piece of wood without

the bother of finding it, drying it, and preparing it, you can often get lengths of cylindrical wood from timber mills. The wood you can get from these places is the sort used for things like fence posts.

To change a branch into a didjeridu, the wood needs to be hollowed. In Australia, the termites would have already done this part for you. However, in places where there are no termites, another method will have to be employed. Because the didjeridu is about 5 feet or so in length, it makes using a lathe practically impossible. I believe it would be difficult to bore the wood out at all without some very expensive equipment. Also, if the branch has any twists or kinks in it, boring it would not work.

Perhaps the best way is to split the wood, hollow the two halves out and then stick them back together. Actually splitting the wood with hammer and chisel is unpredictable and therefore best avoided.

I would suggest sawing the wood in half, straight down the middle. This should be done with a band saw, as it cuts finely enough to not lose much wood in the middle. Using a thin coping saw with the blade turned to ninety degrees is possible but will take a lot of effort and time, and may produce uneven cutting. If you do not know anyone with a band saw, go to your local timber merchant and ask them if they either have one or know someone who does. It is then a case of looking sweet and offering a couple of pounds for someone to run your piece of wood through their band saw (which will most likely take them a few seconds).

Now that you have the two halves of your wood, it is time to hollow them out. First, it is prudent to mark the wood up with a pencil, so you know where the walls of the didjeridu will start and the waste material will finish. Whilst determining the thickness of the walls, bear in mind that the proximal (playing) end should be around 1.25 to 1.5 inches. Also, when marking up, make sure that the two halves, when hollowed out will come back together smoothly, and the insides of the tube wall match.

Two ways of hollowing the wood out are to use a mallet and gouge or a router. Using a mallet and

gouge is time consuming and you may have to get a curved gouge from a specialist shop, or get one ordered. A router should only be used by those who know what they're doing. It is apparently one of the most dangerous machines you can use. In the hands of the experienced, however, hollowing the two halves out should be quick and easy. It is a case once again of finding somebody who knows about such things.

The wood can then be brushed down, to clean the sawdust off it, and the two halves can be glued together. Evostick wood glue will do the trick, or ask at a hardware shop for a strong wood glue. The two halves should be placed together so that they match perfectly, and then clamped in some way. Using cardboard between the clamp and the wood can prevent marks being made.

Once the glue has dried, the didjeridu can be sanded down to give a smooth finish.

It is then up to you as to how you want to decorate your didjeridu. It can be simply varnished or wax polished, to protect it and bring out the natural beauty of the wood. Linseed oil and beeswax boiled up together produce a butter like substance, which can be worked into the wood to give a nice finish. Alternatively, it can be painted or have patterns burnt into it. If you burn patterns into it, you can varnish or wax polish it afterwards. The wood can be burnt by heating a thin piece of metal in a candle flame perhaps, and then pressing the end of the metal onto the wood. This should stain it with a darker brown colour. Using this method, which takes time, can produce a stunning effect once a pattern is created on the wood.

More information on patterns and drawings and also maintenance is given later in this chapter.

Cactus

I understand that the cacti are hollowed, shaped, cured and then tuned.

Cardboard

An easy place to get free cardboard tubes is from a cloth material shop. The 'inner tubes' are strong and thick and are usually thrown away. It is time to smile sweetly and ask politely if they could spare

any tubes. Some tubes sound better than others, so try a few out.

Cardboard tubes, along with metal and plastic piping, are not very attractive. They do however, give you ample opportunity to show your creative skills. They can be painted, perhaps with bright colours or decorated in some other way. A chap I heard about in Glastonbury played a plastic pipe, and he had it wrapped in cloth to disguise the bland plastic appearance.

The Didjeribone

One marvellous thing about cardboard tubes (or plastic/metal) is that if you can find one that fits snugly into another slightly larger one, you can create a kind of trombone. This I have called the 'Didjeribone'. As well as being able to slide up and down a scale, you can tune in to someone else's didjeridu. This makes it a much more flexible instrument.

The smaller tube must fit fairly tightly into the bigger one, to avoid loss of air. It is possible to put elastic bands on the outside of the inner pipe, so that they are underneath the outer pipe and therefore out of view. Another way is to coat the outer end of the small tube and the inner end of the big tube with beeswax.

If you know how to tune by ear or you have another musical instrument, you can draw rings round the smaller tube (where it meets the bigger tube) to identify the pitches. This makes it easier to quickly find them.

How to make Click Sticks

Click sticks are used in pairs, or one click stick is tapped against the side of the didjeridu. When in pairs, there is a smaller rounder stick (the striker), and a larger flatter piece of wood (the struck). Both sticks are made of hardwood and produce a bright clacking sound when struck together.

The smaller stick can be about 10-12 inches in length and 0.25 to 0.5 inches in diameter. It is held at the end when struck against the larger.

The larger stick can also be about 10-12 inches in

length, but it is about 1-2 inches wide and 0.25 to 0.5 inches thick. This stick can also be made serrated on one edge, so that the smaller stick can be rubbed against this, to produce a rasping noise. These dimensions are approximate, and can be adjusted to preference.

How to make a Bullroarer

The bullroarer is a piece of wood attached to a length of twine or string, which when spun round produces a strange buzzing sound.

The piece of wood is generally hardwood, and is flat, with curved edges. A hole is made in one end of the piece of wood, and this hole is used to attach the string.

The size can vary again according to preference, perhaps 0.1 to 1 metres in length, 2-10 centimetres wide and 5 to 12 millimetres thick (with the middle being a little thicker than the edges). The smaller the piece of wood, the higher pitch the buzzing sound will be. The pitch can also be altered by the speed that the bullroarer is spun.

DECORATING YOUR DIDJERIDU

The Aborigines tend to decorate their didjeridus, sometimes with simple dots and rings around the circumference, and sometimes with more complex drawings, depicting stories and/or clan symbols. The images used are often similar to those used in the bark paintings. Anyone interested in making their own bark paintings could consult Edwards and Guerin's "Aboriginal Bark Paintings" (R18) - and for further information on Aborigine art itself, a good book is Caruana's "Aboriginal Art" (R12).

To paint designs, the Aborigines often use a green twig as a 'brush'. They chew one end to shred it, and this is used to paint lines. The other end is left unshredded, and is used to paint dots. Alternatively, they use brushes made with feathers or human hair mounted on small sticks.

The paint they use tends to be different coloured clays, ranging from yellow to orange to red to brown to black. Traditionally, it is unusual to see any other colours in Aborigine art.

According to Simpson (R53), concentric circles are

considered sacred and are used on bullroarers and presumably didjeridus. The concentric circles can signify the camping places of clan heroes/ancestors from the Dreamtime.

The didjeridu can also be decorated with string or twine wrapped tightly round the didjeridu. It is a good idea to varnish the string once in place, to waterproof it. Wet string will soon begin to smell disgusting!

As an alternative to traditional Aboriginal designs, one can just as easily use western decoration. This simply involves using one's imagination. Here are a few ideas:

- Paint it a bright colour.
- Paint the colours of the rainbow down the didjeridu, with the colours blending into one another (Red-Orange-Yellow-Green-Blue-Indigo-Violet).
- A wallpaper/curtain type pattern.
- A Sky blue background with white clouds and a yellow sun.
- A dark blue background with white stars and a moon.
- A black background with stars and planets.
- Your own name in stylish letters down the length of the didjeridu (perhaps with black background and white writing).
- Two Celtic style snakes entwined around the didjeridu, with their heads at the distal end.
- A collage of Twentieth Century objects (eg. cars, planes, televisions).
- A white background with black musical notes down the length.
- The wood background with autumn shade leaves (yellow, red and brown).
- A royal blue background with colourful flowers.
- A white background with different coloured bubbles.
- A blue background with yellow and black bumble-bees.
- A green background with red, blue, yellow, brown, pink and black balls.
- An orange background with black tiger stripes.
- Snake markings (eg. that of the boa constrictor).
- A blue background with different fruits (eg.

oranges, apples, bananas).

- A green background with ladybirds.
- A white background with different coloured directional arrows - the Aborigine directional arrow actually points in the opposite direction to the 'western world' arrow, as it represents the emu's footprint and the direction to follow is wherever the centre 'claw' points.

DIDJERIDU MAINTENANCE

This section is aimed at improving the quality and durability of your didjeridu. It also gives some guidelines as to preventing things from going wrong, and what to do if things do go wrong.

Sealing the didjeridu

If you decide not to paint the didjeridu, it is a good idea to protect the wood/bamboo/hogweed with varnish on the outside. If you are using a plastic or metal tube, then sealing is not necessary.

The inside should also be protected. This can be done by putting a rag firmly in one end, pouring in some varnish or linseed oil, putting a second rag firmly in the other end, and then sloshing the liquid around inside the didjeridu.

It is better to do this, and let the oil/varnish dry before putting wax on the playing end.

Making a mouthpiece

As mentioned earlier, the mouthpiece is really for comfort and ease of play (especially if the mouth hole is too big). The Aborigines use hardened eucalyptus gum, beeswax, or clay. I would suggest that the easiest substance to use is beeswax, though I've been told that a mixture of beeswax and paraffin wax makes the mouthpiece less tacky and sticky. This is especially useful if you have a beard and/or moustache. Candle wax is brittle and is therefore not a very effective long term substitute.

When you have your wax, it will need melting. A good method of melting it, is to put the wax into a tin (eg. a clean, empty tin of tomatoes or baked beans). Put the tin into a saucepan. Fill the saucepan so that the water comes half way up the tin. Heat the saucepan, so that the water is boiling.

After ten minutes or so, the wax will begin to melt. Once the wax is liquid, switch off the heat and remove the tin of wax from the saucepan. Put the tin on newspaper on the kitchen floor, or on a flat surface outside.

You then have a choice of how to administer the wax. Some people prefer to dip their finger in the wax and finger the wax onto the mouth end of the didjeridu. Others tend to turn their didjeridu upside down and carefully dip the instrument in the wax. The width of the tin is generally big enough to accommodate the width of the didjeridu (if not, use a bigger tin!). The instrument only needs to be dipped in about half an inch. It should then be removed and left for a few moments to harden (perhaps twenty to thirty seconds). It can then be dipped again to thicken the wax. The wax, if a little uneven, can be smoothed out with a finger. Alternatively, you can boil up some water in a saucepan, and then drop the wax in so that it melts in lumps. You can then mould the soft lumps onto the didjeridu to make the mouth piece the shape you want it.

It is best to keep this end protected to keep the wax in place. Avoid putting the wax end on the floor because it will pick up dirt, fluff and hair. This is not the sort of thing you want to be putting next to your mouth!

One way of protecting the mouthpiece when you are not using the didjeridu, is to put a small plastic bag over the top and an elastic band to hold the bag in place. There are, I am sure many other alternatives.

The environment

The didjeridu is best kept at room temperature, in a dry place. At any extremes of hot or cold, the wood may warp, split, shrink or expand. If the wood is in a humid environment, or left in the rain, or in a damp garage or cellar, the wood again may warp and/or split.

The answer here is to look after your didjeridu, almost as if it were a child. Don't leave it in a car where it will get too hot, too cold or too damp. Put it somewhere where it will not fall over. Respect your didjeridu and it will serve you well!

Cracks and splits

If the didjeridu does crack a little, or gets a hole in it, wood glue will generally seal the crack up. It is best to administer the glue to the inside (if possible), especially if it is a crack from one end as opposed to a crack in the middle. Some wood glues, when dry, are stronger and tougher than the wood itself.

Bamboo didjeridus often have a short life span. Some of them are almost spring loaded, waiting to explode. Bamboo didjeridus do indeed explode sometimes with an almighty crack. If this happens, there is often little one can do to save it.

Often, however, the bamboo will begin to split at one end, giving you warning of an impending demise. If this happens, glue the split and bind it up immediately, either with strong garden string/twine or with electrical wiring tape (which can then be covered up with string). The string should be tightly bound, as shown earlier in this section.

WHY DOES THE DIDJERIDU MAKE THE NOISE IT MAKES?

I must thank the physicist, Professor Charles Taylor, for the answer to this question. He writes:

"The didjeridu is related to instruments like the trumpet or tuba. Instead of having a relatively small mouthpiece which allows the lips to be stretched very tightly as in brass instruments, the large opening at the end of the didjeridu allows the players lips to be very relaxed. But they still act as a reed. In other words, the lips act like a tap, opening and closing regularly, and each time they open, a compression is generated in the air of the pipe. The compression travels down to the other end of the pipe and is reflected back. The key thing is that the opening and closing of the lips must coincide with the time taken (for the compression) to travel up and down the pipe so that a steady oscillation is maintained. It is like pushing a child on a swing... if the timing of the 'push' is right, not much effort is required to

keep it going.

"The principle is not the same as blowing across a bottle... that relies on edge tones generated by the impact of the jet of air on the edge of the bottle neck." (R57)



MUSIC & BOOKS

This section is a collection of artists/groups and recordings that involve the didjeridu.

Adam Plack & Johnny (White Ant) Soames

Winds of Warning (Australian Music International)
This is my favourite album. The music is earthy with excellent rhythms. The didjeridu playing is very good.

Outback

Baka (Hannibal Records)
This is good rhythm music, with an unusual didjeridu style. The player, Graham Wiggins (now with Dr. Didj - I think), uses a digital sampler as he plays, so a lot of the patterns heard are recorded as he plays, and then he continues over the top of those repeating samples.

Phil Thornton & Steven Cragg

Initiation (New World Cassettes)
Mood music with the didjeridu as backing. Very atmospheric and brilliant for mediation/creative visualization. Steven Cragg is the didjeridu player.

Group/Artist & Recording

Kate Bush - The Dreaming
Bushfire - Any
Dr Didj - Any
Alan Dargin - Any
Jem Friar - Lone Wolf Dreaming
Rolf Harris - Yarabangee and others
Jamiroquai - Didgin' Out
Kangaroo Moon - Any
Levellers - This Garden/The Boatman Lights in a Fat City - Somewhere
Ocean & Rose - Wiracocha
Mark Robson - Take Time To Dream
Spirit People - Any
Terry Saleh - Medicine Man
Thomas & Shaw - Garden Of Peace
Tribal Drift - Any
Tjapukai Dancers - Proud To Be Aborigine
Yothu Yindi - Any

BOOKS AND ARTICLES: AUTHOR'S CHOICE

The World of the First Australians By R.M. & C.H. Berndt

The Australian Aborigines By A.P. Elkin

Elkin and the Berndts are essential reading if you are interested in the Aborigines. Their complete works are possibly the most exhaustive anthropological studies made into the original Australians. I have learnt much from these authors in my quest for knowledge about the didjeridu and the Aborigines. ("Aboriginal Men of High Degree" is a superb, in depth study of the clevermen.)

The Songlines By Bruce Chatwin

This book is written as a journal and the first part of the book is an interesting glimpse into life in Australia and the outback. Although the didjeridu is not talked about, there is a good deal of information on the Dreamtime and modern Aborigine life styles. According to Allen (R7), Chatwin's book is considered to be a kind of bible amongst the 'whitefellas' in the outback.

The Yiraki By T.A. Jones **The Australian Didjeridu By A.M. Moyle**

The articles of Jones and Moyle give excellent information about the didjeridu and are anthropological, geographical and historical in nature. Anyone wanting to research further the didjeridu and/or Aborigine music should read the articles by these authors.

Voices of the First Day By R. Lawlor

A book that is becoming a classic. The best up to date book that I have encountered about the Aborigines and their culture. There is a brief mention of the didjeridu, but some of this information appears to contradict other sources.

Didgeridoo By Dirk Schellberg

A fascinating book about the author's travels around Australia. A good introduction into the didjeidu and the Aborigines.

RECOMMENDED PLAYERS AND LINKS

Sandy Lawson <http://www.didjeridu.co.uk/>

Per Hultquist <http://www.logrhythmmusic.com/>

DREAMWORLD / DREAMTIME

The universe and all the matter in it is built up of atoms. Further still, the atoms can be broken down into sub atomic particles (eg. quarks, electrons, photons etc.). These particles are basically a form of energy and so it could be said that the universe itself is actually energy.

Through our five senses (visual, kinaesthetic, auditory, olfactory and gustatory) we experience this energy in a certain way. Indeed every person will experience this energy from their own unique perspective (eg. variations in perception of colours, sounds, smells, tastes etc.). We can, though, generalise that we have a common experience of the world around us.

Some people, however, seem to have a 'sixth sense' as they are able to experience the universal energy in a grander way. Two possible ways of experiencing the energy in this grand fashion are highlighted by Lawlor (R34): synaesthetic (mingling of the senses) and hyperaesthesia (intensified sense awareness). These ways are used by the Aborigines (especially the clevermen) to 'see' the Dreamtime energy, that which underlies the universe that we know.

A form of energy that the Aborigines are particularly sensitive to are magnetic fields. In much the same way that birds and some other animals know where they are when they migrate, the Aborigines too seem to be in tune with magnetic energy. Apparently, it has been said that there is no such thing as a lost Aborigine. It is possible that the magnetic fields that they perceive are connected with their notion of the 'songlines', and also to the Dreamtime. According to Lawlor (R34), the Aborigines say that magnetism is the voice of Earth's dreaming.

These magnetic energy fields can be seen in some of the Aborigine paintings, and are used to illustrate the underlying reality, the Dreamtime.

As discussed earlier, the Dreamtime is a plane of existence outside the time and space of our world. It is the stuff of mind and ideas, intangible but just as real as our own universe. Indeed, it could be said that the Dreamtime is the underlying reality from which our world is created. All ideas exist there before they become manifest in our physical world. The Aborigines believe that if we fail to focus the Dreamtime into our world (by singing it into existence), our world will cease to be.

The movement of life from the subjective (dream state) to the objective (physical reality) is the only explanation for a string of events. The Aborigines have no concept of past, present and future, and this is reflected in the fact that they have no word in their language for "time". They live perhaps in the world of the eternal 'now'.

As all things move from the inner mind world to the outer physical world, a person must dream (while asleep) his

journeys/actions and the country he lives in, before all these things can manifest into the physical world. It is thought that when we dream, we are closer to the Dreamtime than when we are awake. Indeed, dreams are considered to be one of the gateways into the Dreamtime. If this is the case, when we dream, perhaps we are closer to the true nature of ourselves, the essence of our being.

Apparently, some Aborigines will create a song from what they have dreamt when they wake in the morning. They believe that this tells the animals around that they are close to their true nature and the animals will help them in their hunting and survival. Some tribes also see dreams as a form of practise. Indeed, the night before going out on a hunt, they watch their dogs while they sleep to see which of them are dreaming of chasing and running. The next day, they will only take the dogs who appeared to be dreaming of hunting, as they believe the dogs will be better prepared having practised in the night (R35).

According to Simpson (R53), some tribes regard dreams as actual material occurrences, so dreams are very much a part of their lives.

The Aborigines often use their dream symbols for guidance in life. They also practise the art of dream control, which they use to bring symbolic messages into the waking world. Apparently, the dream control (also known as 'lucid dreaming') is learnt early on in life as part of the initiation process for each Aborigine (R34).

BRIEF GLOSSARY OF ABORIGINAL WORDS

As mentioned earlier in this book, different tribes have different vocabularies. This means that words here will apply to some tribes, but not to others.

Aboriginal Word	Meaning
Alchera :	Dream, beginning time
Alcheringa :	Dream, beginning time
Bala :	Totem/spirit animal
Bobo :	Goodbye
Churinga :	Sacred elliptical stone
Cumwin (Cumwun) :	Friend
Djngurba :	Dreamtime
Dupun :	Hollow log coffin/mortuary pole
Gulagula :	Someone in search of sexual adventure
Jarawajewa :	Totem
Jerepunga :	Totem
Jukurrpa :	Dreaming
Kumalida :	Magic
Lorrkon :	Hollow log coffin
Tjurunga :	Sacred/sacred thing (like CHURINGA)
Yoi :	Play about corroboree
Yolngu :	Aborigine of Arnhemland

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