

BALANCE TONE DRONE REEDS

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When ordering a set of bagpipes for a learner piper and having a choice of a number of different sets of drone reeds. We decided to opt for the Balance Tone Drone Reeds to see how they performed.

The reeds arrived uninstalled and in a moulded plastic package, which ensured that they arrived safely. The reeds are made with a two piece telescoping barrel which is simply a press fit. Although it fits well, the chance of them being dislodged quite easily is the first thing that comes to mind.

The tongue is a textured plastic material that is a little more substantial in size than the Ezeedrone style of reeds. They do seem to be less affected by heat for this reason, particularly the bass. There is a tuning plug in the bottom of the reed, which has a recessed top, which, when twisted blocks some of the sound hole in the reed barrel, allowing less air to pass and giving some adjustability of refinement. Between the telescoping barrel and the tuning plug, there is a lot of room for adjustment of pitch. The tongue is held in place by a substantial rubber sleeve and a similar sleeve is used as a bridle. Minor bridle adjustment makes a big difference overall.

We noted: Good pin point tuning. Very good consistent starts. Reeds worked well in a variety of instruments.

There are a number of slots cut into the tongue bed which are supposed to expel any moisture that builds up under the tongue and prevent gurgling or stopping. We do not know how affective this is as we were unable to get them wet enough to try.



The bass drone we found to be very full and a little “boomy” in tone. It was difficult to significantly refine it. The tenors were very vibrant, but a little too “buzzy” in tonal texture for my taste. The reeds produce a very vibrant, full sound, but in my opinion reduced the drones to almost a generic sound. I have listened to quite a few top class players using these drones and I am confident I can pick them by tone. Personally, I think there are better options if you seek to refine your drone sound or highlight a real quality bagpipe.

The drones tested were very stable, and responded quite well to blowing variation.

Overall, they are a reed with a lot of adjustment. Well manufactured and they go straight out of the box. They have a vibrant tone, erring on the side of a buzzy, with a big bass sound. Good stability. Recommended if that is the type of sound you seek.