

ROCKET REED REVIEW

These reeds we are told are tailor made for specific instruments. When they arrived they came in a plastic resealable bag and had a compound much like “blue-tac” with them. They appear fairly indestructible so this is not a cause for concern.

The reeds have a homemade feel about them with pen marks on the blades and barrels and a serial number written on them. This is not a negative, as they do appear very well made. The barrels are a phenolic glass fibre and appear to be hand turned. They have a nose cone that press fits very snugly into the barrel. The cone has a recess drilled into it in which the “blue-tac” or putty can be added to sharpen the pitch of the reed. This cannot easily be removed, so the reeds are best set once. A problem if you play a number of chanters of differing pitch.

The blades are made from carbon fibre that gives a mellower tone, or glass fibre that is a little more vibrant. We have tried both; however the glass fibre reeds were set up very easy and one tenor did not want to go. On the carbon bladed reeds the bass is a different material to the tenors. Obviously this produces a different result to matching the fibres of the tenor blades; a sign of the attention to detail that has gone into the design.

The blades are held in place by an O ring and an identical ring is used as a bridle also. There is limited adjustability using the bridle and not a lot from the “blue-tac” in the nose cone.

The carbon reeds were “plug and play” and went very well. I expected them to be more air efficient based on the reviews previously read. The tenors went well, were extremely well balanced but were a little dull in tone for my personal taste. The bass was a little hungry for air, but went well also. It lacked a little depth of tone to my ear. The overall result was pleasant but it was difficult to get the “oneness” from the instrument that you would expect from cane.

The set we had were a little low in pitch and tuned a little too low on the tuning pins, particularly the bass reed. The lack of significant adjustability meant they had to remain there.

The Glass fibre reeds were a little brassy in the tenor sound, it was difficult to balance them well as one kept stopping and hardly went at all.

We noted: Good starts. Good stability. Good balance on the carbon set, but they are not readily interchangeable between instruments.

The stability of the reeds was very, very good. They held tuning between themselves exceptionally well. What they fail to do is follow the chanter. So as your chanter sharpens while you play, you need to re-tune. No problem. Put your pipes down for a few minutes and you need to re-start the process. This was a problem when going from a tuning room to competing in a room of differing temperature. You have to ensure that your instrument has fully acclimatised and been played to the point of stability.

Overall, a well made reed. They are pleasant sounding and obviously best to have made to the pitch and for the instrument in which you intend using them. We are told they suit the wider bored bagpipe better a small bored one. They are “plug and play” (in most cases), although we assume an issue such as the one we discovered with the glass tongued tenors would be addressed by the maker.

Recommended as indestructible, almost maintenance free and very steady (to a fault). Definitely worth giving full requirements to the maker as they have limited adjustability and limited interchange-ability (is that a word?) between differing makes of bagpipe.



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