

from hand to drum

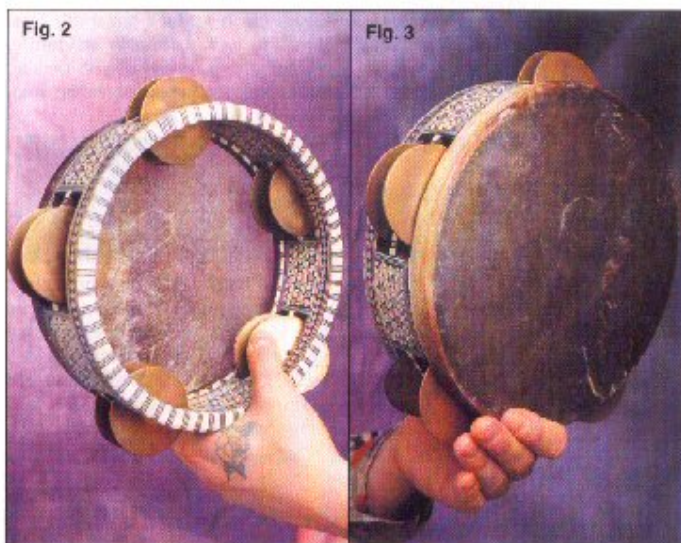
HAND DRUM TECHNIQUES FROM AROUND THE WORLD



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Egyptian Req

This month we're going to commence with the Egyptian req. The req is basically a headed tambourine with jingles. The difference between this tambourine and the standard version we all know and love, is that the req uses fish-skin for the head and has larger jingles than usual. If we look at Fig. 1, we see two examples of the req. On the left is the traditional variety while the one on the right is a more modern tuneable drum (built by yours truly). The traditional drum has a fish-skin head which is glued over the rim. The shell is usually about 8 1/2" in diameter by 2 1/2" deep and made of wood. Five double sets of heavy brass jingles are suspended in cutouts in the shell. Before the skin is glued in place, the shell is elaborately decorated with a mosaic of ivory, mother-



of-pearl or more environmentally friendly materials such as plastic. The detailed work found on these drums can be quite staggering. As can be seen from Fig. 1, the tuneable req has bolt tensioners, a plastic head and one less set of jingles. The drum should be tuned to a fairly high, 'cracking' tone. With the traditional drum, this high pitch



could be achieved by holding it over a heat source; some players use a light-bulb fixed inside a biscuit tin with holes in the lid, some use tiny electric blankets. Others cry because their drums sound like soggy cardboard boxes. I prefer the bolt tension variety, but they can be tricky to get hold of (unless you make them yourself, of course, or check out what Remo has to offer). I certainly recommend that you proceed with caution if you try the biscuit tin idea: use as low a watt bulb as you can find – even then it will still get quite hot.

Anyway, let's look at the playing position and basic strokes. The drum is held in the left hand as in Fig. 2. The thumb locks onto the rear jingle and forms a clamp with the first finger on the front bottom edge of the drum, as in Fig. 3. This frees up the ring finger of the left hand to strike the bottom jingle. More about this later.

The drum should fall over slightly to your left, causing your forearm to face upwards. Try not to tense your arm and stiffen up holding the drum in this position; the secret of all well-articulated technique is relaxation. Now, from this position try striking the bottom jingle with your ring finger tip, as in Fig. 4. (NB. Some players use the middle finger for this stroke, as in Fig. 5.)

Next, we'll introduce a jingle strike with the other hand, again on the same jingle with the tip of the ring finger. See the position in Fig. 6.

To get us warmed up for next month we'll just get an even 'RLRL' pattern going on the jingle. Good luck, and see you next time for some dums and teks.

Fig. 6

