

REVIEW OF CHRIS ARMSTRONG'S X-TREME DRONE REEDS

BY

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After speaking with Chris Armstrong regarding his new X-TREME Drone Reeds last month, he kindly sent a set of his PREMIUM DRONE REEDS for me to test and review.

I was eagerly awaiting a parcel from Chris and around 1 month ago I received the reeds in the post.

Upon opening the parcel, I found that the reeds had been packaged in a very different way from all other drone reeds that are currently on the market.



A black cylindrical cardboard tube with attractive writing and branding. Taking the lid off revealed 3 pre cut cylindrical holes that house each reed and offering a lot of protection for transit and storage.

An initial inspection of the reeds found them to be extremely well made and manufactured to a very high precision. Everything about the aesthetics' of these drone reeds is very appealing.

Now came the test. I had set out to test these drone reeds in 3 different sets of Bagpipes that I own

- 1: 1917 Full Silver Duncan MacRae – Begg Sheepskin Bag
- 2: Pre 1900 Full Ivory Henry Starck – Bannatyne Hide
- 3: 2009 Atherton MD. Bannatyne Hide – Willie McCallum

The initial test for 1 week was with the MacRaes. After adding a little more hemp on the drone reeds to secure them into the reed seats, I blew up the drones, corking off the chanter stock. I set my tuner for 478 the pitch of my solo Blackwood Sinclair Chanter and preceded to tune the outside tenor drone to this pitch. Very little adjustment of the bridle was necessary to have the drone reed set at the strength that I normally blow and then a fine adjustment of the tuning screw so that the drone was tuning just above the hemp line. I followed this procedure with the next tenor drone then the bass drone. The strike in was good with no squealing at all. Once all drones were in tune, I noticed that I had a big bass sound that blended very very well with the tenors. Extremely stable and not much change at all with varying of blowing pressure. Once I added my chanter, again no problem with strike in and after a good 15 mins of playing the drones were locked in and solid as a rock. I was so impressed with this setup that I couldn't wait to set them up in my pre 1900 Starcks.

PRE 1900 STARCKS

This test like the MacRaes was for 1 week. After setting the reeds in the reed seats I played the pipes along with the chanter. I noticed I had trouble with some steadiness with the middle tenor. I had to spend quite a lot of time to get these reeds going in the Starcks. Frustration and finally perseverance paid off after a solid hour of adjusting the bridles and tuning screws for the reeds to be as good as they were in the MacRaes. After this time I finally produced a most beautiful and steady drone sound, again with good bass volume blending together well with the tenors.

2009 ATHERTON MD.

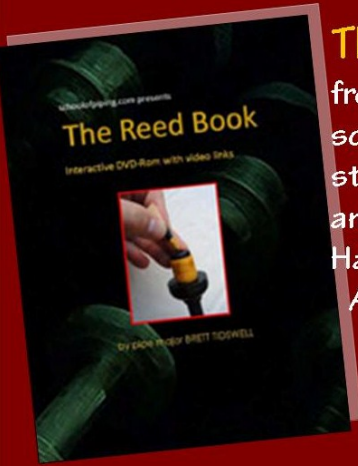
This was the final bagpipe I was to finish my testing of these reeds and was looking forward to putting them into a more modern made instrument. Again installing the reeds firm in the reed seat I then needed some minor adjustments to suit these drones. Once done, again just superb. Lovely balanced sound. Again big bass and a good balance of volume with the tenors. Strike in was excellent.

All in all I would thoroughly recommend the new X-TREME DRONE REEDS by Chris Armstrong.

I found they are more difficult to set up than your normal plug and play drone reeds, but with a little patience and perseverance and being familiar with the way the reed works and adjusts by reading the instructions on the website you will find that you have a superior set of drone reeds that produce the goods. There is not much variance in the drone reeds with change of pressure and they seem to lock in and stay extremely stable. I have been really impressed with them from the packaging, manufacture and tone they produce and also due to the fact they are very air efficient compared to other reeds I have used in the past. The X-TREME DRONE REEDS are definitely the drone reed of the future.

I would like to thank Chris Armstrong for giving me the opportunity in testing his drone reeds and also for allowing me to write this review.

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The Reed Book DVD-Rom covers everything from making reeds, through to setting up, problem solving and manipulating reeds. Easy to follow step by step instructions with many descriptive photographs and video links. From the author of *The Complete Pipers Handbook*.

Available from selected suppliers and from our online shop at:

www.schoolofpiping.com