

LP ADJUSTABLE SNARE AND KEVIN RICARD CAJONS



From £180 Two new American-made cajon models from percussion giant LP

WORDS: TOM BRADLEY

Keeping up with the constant demand for the traditional Peruvian box drum, LP has added two brand new models to its cajon selection. Today we're taking a look at the Adjustable Snare cajon and the Kevin Ricard signature model.

Build

The Adjustable Snare cajon uses three sets of 16-strand snare wires evenly spaced along a metal beam, positioned on the back of the playing surface. A long connecting rod then extends to the back of the cajon where a control knob can, as the name suggests, be used to alter the wire tension. The snares can also be turned off entirely for a more traditional sound. Featuring an MDF shell, the body has a smooth, painted black finish, while the birch front-plate is left in all its natural glory. The cajon has a small rubber foot at each corner, designed to prevent sliding and add to the overall stability.

The Kevin Ricard model is the latest addition to LP's Americana series and comes bearing the name of the session percussionist whose credits include *The Tonight Show* and *American Idol* bands. Sharing features with some of its siblings, the Signature model uses 11-ply 'plantation grown baltic birch' - chosen for its durability and resonant qualities. The Signature model uses a heartwood front-plate and has "angled top corners for comfortable playing". Interestingly, not only are the corners rounded off at the front, but the back edges have been cut-away completely from top to bottom. Combined with a slightly shallower frame, this could mean a little more comfort for those who like to hook their feet around the back of the cajon whilst playing. On the back of the box, above the 5" port is the LP Americana Series logo, including the "handcrafted in the USA" slogan.

Also try...



1 SCHLAGWERK AGILE PRO CAJON

We say: "A well-crafted instrument with an excellent sound."



2 LP WALNUT CAJON

We say: "The LP Walnut cajon is hugely versatile and able to deliver the full spectrum of tone options."



TRIPLE SNARE

Three 16-strand snare wires are evenly spaced across the front-plate

OVER THE COURSE OF SIX REVOLUTIONS OF THE REAR KNOB, THE WIRES GO FROM AN OFF POSITION TO THE TIGHTEST THAT THE CAJON WILL ALLOW - OFFERING A PLETHORA OF TONAL OPTIONS

Other than the obvious difference in materials between the two instruments, the main characteristic that sets them apart is the unique tuning system of the Americana cajon. Instead of snare wires, the Kevin Ricard signature uses four D'addario guitar strings stretched from top to bottom along

the inside of the front-plate. Four corresponding dials (which appear to be actual guitar tuning pegs) are recessed at the front of the seating surface, allowing string tension to be altered. Not only does this offer an alternative tonal characteristic, but also allows on-the-fly tweaks.

CORNERS

Curved front corners are designed for more comfortable playing

BIRCH

The Signature cajon's body is made of 11-ply plantation-grown Baltic birch

STRINGS

The Kevin Ricard model uses four D'Addario guitar strings instead of wires

Hands On

At first glance there is a distinct difference between the two models. The Signature model, with its natural birch body and curved edges, looks discernibly more elegant than the plain black of the Adjustable Snare model. That said, it would be entirely unfair to pit the two directly against each other considering the massive price gap. The more expensive Kevin Ricard Signature model comes in at a whopping £428 while the Adjustable Snare is a mere £180 in comparison. Therefore, it may come as little surprise that the Signature model comes out on top in terms of sound.

Despite the slightly shallower profile of the Signature model, the birch shell combined with the paler heartwood front-plate produces a noticeably lower bass note than its sibling. The guitar string tuning system lends a dryer response to the higher notes which gives it more of a papery quality. The tensioning system itself is very subtle and, despite the convenient location of the dials, takes a fair bit of turning to result in any noticeable change in sound.

The Adjustable Snare Cajon, with its triple 16-strand snare wires, is far less subtle as I dial through the tension settings. Over the course of six revolutions of the rear knob, the wires go from an off position to the tightest the cajon will allow, offering a plethora of tonal options. A word of warning though; at the very tightest setting the wires are crushed against the back of the front-plate, resulting in some prominent metallic spring-like noises.

Although the Signature model offers more low-end, the Adjustable Snare cajon still produces a pleasing thump when struck in the centre. The bass response was amplified even further when combined with DW's new Cajon Pedal (reviewed in *Rhythm* 265). I used this cajon as part of a mini-kit set up with snare and hi-hats for an acoustic gig, and was not disappointed. A small but useful feature is the semi-circular dowel that is placed along the top of the sound port on the inside. This simple addition makes carrying the cajon with one hand much more comfortable. The Kevin Ricard Signature model is undoubtedly better suited for the more serious cajon players out there, but for the hobbyist or the local street musician, the Adjustable Snare Cajon is a safer, more affordable bet. **R**

VERDICT: The Kevin Ricard Signature model is not only the better looking of the two but also the better sounding cajon, although the Adjustable Snare model still holds up at its considerably lower price-point.

BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
RHYTHM RATING	★★★★★

Essential spec



PRICE

Adjustable Snare cajon: £180;
Kevin Ricard Signature: £428

MATERIAL AND CONSTRUCTION

Adjustable Snare cajon: MDF resonance box, birch playing surface;
Kevin Ricard Signature: 11-ply birch resonance box, heartwood playing surface

CONTACT

Latin Percussion
www.lpmusic.com