

B&S MBX3 Heritage X-Line Trumpet

Bold Sound, Distinct Look

With input from French commercial player Christian Martinez, B&S Instruments has introduced a powerful new studio horn with the MBX3 Heritage X-Line professional trumpet.

The instrument is equipped with an array of new features that improve the trumpet's sound and ease of play, making it an ideal fit for session players requiring a durable instrument with a compelling presence. Embracing innovation without sacrificing tradition, the new instrument builds on the foundation of B&S's existing X-Line of professional trumpets, maintaining the quick response, bright projection and steadfast intonation for which the company's pro and student horns are known.

I play-tested two models of the MBX Heritage X-Line trumpet: the clear-lacquered MBXHLLR-1 and the special brushed-gold lacquer MBXHLLR-8M. (The trumpet is also available in silver-plated and special "vintage" surface-treated finishes.) Both horns scored high in the aesthetic category, with unique design elements that offer improvements in visual appeal and playability. For example, a pair of closed-ring first- and third-valve saddles ensure a comfortable hand-feel, and they also add a nice symmetry to the horn's design. Similarly, a reconstructed tuning-slide (featuring a new curve radius in the bow) adds clean lines but also enhances tonal precision. And while both models projected a dark yet toothsome tone, I found that the brushed gold finish added softer, smokier shades without diminishing the horn's bite.

Other distinctive features include a third-valve slide stop mechanism that allays the problem of knocking mutes out of the bell while adjusting intonation with the third-valve slide. Fast-threaded valve caps allow for quick access to the trumpet's hand-lapped Monel pistons, and a specially designed leadpipe taper offers an improvement in the trumpet's annulus (commonly referred to as the mouthpiece "gap"), making it easier for players to achieve solid pitch performance in the upper and lower registers.

High- and low-register playing were indeed areas of distinction for the MBX Heritage X-Line series. I noticed that the horn fared particularly well in the middle-upper range, between E in the staff and an octave above. My playing in this range felt remarkably free and unencumbered, and I encountered little resistance as I pushed on toward high F, F# and G. As a player with an "upstream" embouchure, this was especially important, as I often find myself making incremental adjustments to my horn

angle as I ascend in range. With the MBX3 Heritage, those adjustments felt less necessary, as the horn maintained a consistent sense of openness across nearly all registers.

Projection was another star aspect of the MBX3 Heritage trumpet, owing largely to the instrument's #43 bell. This lightweight, hand-hammered model is made from an alloy heavy on copper and features a French-bead rim for a clear tone and broad dispersal of sound. I found that my playing was pure and distinct even at pianissimo, and that the combination of bell material and leadpipe construction minimized any element of airiness in my tone. At loud volumes, the horn maintained a comparably warm, round sound, without taking on the brassy rattle that sometimes creeps into fortissimo playing.

Each trumpet comes with a wood-shell case, and an accompanying trim kit with alternate finger buttons (plain and mother of pearl), valve caps and valve bottoms (light, medium and heavy gauge) allows players to customize the look and feel of their horns.

The B&S MBX3 Heritage X-Line series offers a trumpet that can meet the demands of session work and commercial playing. Professional players will appreciate this model's high-quality design characteristics and ease of play, but trumpeters of all stripes will admire the instrument's distinct look and bold sound.

—Brian Zimmerman

Ordering info: b-and-s.com



Campellone Deluxe Series Archtop

Carrying the Torch of Tradition

The "master built" technique of guitar making, once a common occurrence in the United States, has unfortunately become the exception and not the rule in today's competitive marketplace. With overseas manufacturing and automated machinery now the accepted standard, it is more important than ever that dedicated luthiers like Mark Campellone carry the torch of tradition forward by handcrafting instruments of the highest quality. Campellone's Deluxe Series archtop is a prime example of his mastery, and at \$6,495 it is surprisingly affordable considering its rather fine pedigree.

Campellone has been building instruments for 30 years and is obsessed with classic archtops. He cites D'Angelico, Stromberg and Epiphone as

influences but credits Gibson as his main inspiration. "I always loved the Gibson L5 and Super 400," he says. Campellone also points out that he is attracted to the beauty of the instrument as well as the sound it produces. His current offerings feature five archtop models, and he individually constructs each and every guitar in the true "master" tradition, controlling virtually every facet of the build.

The Deluxe Series is third in Campellone's lineup, with the EP and Standard Series below it and the Special Series and Cameo above it. Visually, the Gibson influence of the Deluxe is immediately obvious with several design elements that are reminiscent of the '30s and '40s L5. In particular, the tobacco sunburst finish and art deco appointments bring out the

classic archtop vibe. Campellone has a background in art, and as a builder he is very aware of subtle design elements and strives to achieve a look that is both original and classic. The Deluxe features many art deco elements that are inspired by local architecture near his Greenville, Rhode Island, workshop. The abalone inlays on the fretboard add to the look of the guitar, as does the five-ply binding that outlines the entire body as well as the fingerboard, headstock and pickguard. The tailpiece, also a custom design, is gold-plated brass accented with an ebony appliqué. The headstock inlay again sets the mood with deco-themed inlay and truss rod cover.

The Deluxe is constructed with beautiful 3A quilted maple sides and back and a tightly grained, hand-graduated 3A spruce top, all selected from Campellone's personal stash of quality tonewoods. Based on the L5, the Deluxe features a Venetian cutaway and 21-inch-long body with a 17-inch lower bout. The depth is 3 inches on this guitar, which is slightly thinner than the L5; this was done to make the guitar more comfortable to play. The guitar I play-tested came with a Kent Armstrong floating pickup, but other pickup options are available on request. Overall, it's an absolutely gorgeous guitar that emanates quality.

The first thing that struck me when getting my hands on this guitar was how solidly it is built. Very much like the Gibson L5, the Deluxe has some weight to it. Campellone builds all his guitars to perform well acoustically. "You need something with some timber on it so it will have power," he says. This guitar is tonebar-braced and speaks extremely well unamplified. When plugged in, the Deluxe is warm and smooth with the kind of character that any jazz guitarist will appreciate. The slightly thinner depth helps reduce low-end feedback when amplified, and I love the "stealth" volume and tone wheels that are hidden under the pickguard.

Campellone is among a select group of builders who still produce archtops the old way, by hand. And although there are other options out there, these "master built" instruments will always stand apart from the crowd.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: mccampellone.com



Hal Leonard Real Book Multi-Tracks Custom-Mix Play-Alongs

Hal Leonard has introduced the Real Book Multi-Tracks Play-Along series, which combines printed leads sheets with an online interface that lets musicians adjust tempo and create a customized mix of each tune with individually selectable tracks.

Hal Leonard's Play-Along series—which offers the musician the ability to practice along with backing tracks created by pro musicians—has been around for a while. Traditionally the music was printed in a book, while the audio was delivered on a CD. Eventually, Hal Leonard began to offer the audio portion online and later added the ability to adjust play-back. The new Multi-Tracks Play-Alongs take things a step further with individually selectable tracks that provide the user with custom mixes.

The five books in the Multi-Tracks Play-Along series are all targeted at the jazz player: *All Blues*, *Charlie Parker*, *Miles Davis*, *Jazz Funk* and *Maiden Voyage*. Each contains 10 songs. Inside the book, you will find a web address and access code for the online content. When you log in, your purchased titles will appear, and clicking on one will bring up the track listing for that book. You then have the option to select any of the C, E-flat, B-flat or bass clef transpositions. The appropriate lead sheet is then displayed in a new window along with playback controls. Users can set the tempo anywhere from 100 percent down to 25 percent.

The individual track buttons are next, and you can turn each individual instrument on or off with a simple click. Available tracks are horn (sax or trumpet), piano/organ, bass, drums and a click-track. The tracks sound very good, and they are played with the horn executing the head on the first and last pass with the remaining choruses open for soloing. (It would

be nice to have the option of selecting exactly how many choruses you would like to solo over instead of it being a fixed number.) A looping feature lets you choose specific sections of the song, or even entire choruses, to be repeated indefinitely for practice purposes. In addition, full stereo mixes can be downloaded as MP3 files for offline playing.

Hal Leonard's Multi-Tracks Play-Along series represents a major step forward, utilizing digital audio technology to provide aspiring musicians with more productive learning tools.

—Keith Baumann

Ordering info: halleonard.com

