

Custom Music

HB-50 Grand Orchestral CC - Yeah, they really had one there. I did NOT see what all the fuss is about. But then again, HB's don't speak to me personally. It wasn't a dog, but bells didn't ring and sparks didn't fly. I did try several mp's on it (Conn Helleberg, Laskey 30G, Klier T4D, SSH), but the horn just didn't feel good to me. Intonation was pretty good, and it made a good sound. Responded well, too, but it didn't reach out and grab me personally. I heard several comments at the booth from various players that the horn was great. To each his own.

Jeff was a busy man helping folks and answering questions, so I didn't get to say hello. I always like visiting with him. In case you're lurking, "Hello, Jeff. Thanks for the honk."

Miraphone

Always great to visit with Richard Murrow and Richard Morgan. After sharing emails, I finally got to meet Markus Theinert. Good stories told, too. Unfortunately, die Biere wurden nicht gefunden. You would think they could ship some hefeweizen from Bavaria along with those horns, eh?

1292 CC (SP) - I was impressed with the overall playability and sound of the horn, much more so than the 1291 CC. Intonation was great, as was the response. Nothing funky here. This is a horn that could do most jobs very well, IMHO. I still think the 1291/2 is a lineup of winners.

184 CC - Neat little horn. Just like I remember. I wish I could put it in my pocket and carry it around. It's fairly small, but it's a good player. I think I would have liked to try a Helleberg 7B (or equivalent size/shape). It looks like a toy, but plays just as well as it's big brothers.

281 Firebird 5v YB - I see why it is the new fad. I could take off three months from F tuba and sit down and play this one without

any issues. Intonation, response, playability were SCARY-GOOD. Low range was FREAKIN' SCARY. Made a great sound, but not as small as I anticipated. It put out just fine.

281 Firebird 6v GB - All the great things about the 5v, but the darkness of goldbrass. DAMN! I actually think the 5v played so well, and so in tune (even down low), that a sixth valve isn't necessary. You'll have to be your own judge. A 5v in GB might just rock my world.

I did play my own 181 later that evening in an ensemble setting. My horn does what I need (even if I suck). If a new Firebird showed up on my doorstep, however, I would NOT send it back.

Norwegian Star Eb 5v - Really nice Eb. Plays well throughout. Intonation and response are super. Everyone talks about it having a smaller sound. I thought it had a great sound at ppp, and it made a big sound when you stepped on the gas. It's not a little pipsquale eefer.

282 3/4 BBb 4v - What a nice smaller BBb! Played great from top to bottom. I'd buy my young son one of these without question. Not stuffy at all anywhere. Really easy to play in all registers.

Miraphone Gig Bag - They had a euph bag on display. Wow! A lot of thought went into this bag. Several pockets for stuff. One was big enough for a music folder. High quality construction. Thick padding everywhere, and there was a hard disc of sorts in the lid that went over the bell. Very sturdy, well-designed, and looked nice. A standard price list was not available to take home, and I didn't think to ask about current availability.

Meinl Weston

Got to finally meet Roger Lewis in person. He's always great to talk with on the phone, emails, etc., but moreso in person. Had a really nice visit and tried some nice horns.

Thor 5/4 CC (SP) - I heard that the Thor was called a "Holy Crap" horn. You play 5-6 notes on it and say, "HOLY CRAP!" I can see why the folks around here who own them preach their love for these horns. All aspects of the horn were stellar, IMO. Low range shouted. It's a different blow down low from what which I'm accustomed, but it rocked. Roger made her talk down in the cellar. Worthy of a look from everyone. BIG sound, but not woofy big. You could audition with this horn and keep it on the gig. Massive power, but not tubby. Lots of clarity, yet had breadth.

2265 6/4 CC (SP) - Now the chair is vibrating. Lots of BAT presence and enveloping vibration in the sound. A great horn overall. Low range not as free as the Thor, but I think that's an apples vs. oranges thing.

2040 Eb - I didn't write any notes on this one, and after playing so many horns, I can't remember if it had a 5th valve. Sorry. Falling down on the job. I can say that my impression of it was that it was a great efer that I could easily own. Had that great MW sound.

No 2141 this year. I'd sure like to try one. It could be the Eb to beat all for me.

45-slp F - I still love the sound of these horns, and I still think it's a great axe. I know there are varying opinions on these, but to each his own. I just can't get over the sound. It grabs me every time.

45 - slz F - This makes a big sound. One of these might make CC obsolete in a quintet because of the breadth of sound and its versatility. I think the right mp would have endeared me further to this instrument.

No Baer models, but you never know... A regular production model could find its way into the circuit horns one day. One can always hope.

DEG/Willson

Willson Eb 3400 4p/1r - I remember now why I liked my Kurath. I liked everything about this horn. There have been comments in the past regarding funky intonation and stuffy low range. I only noticed a couple of notes that required adjustment (nothing dramatic), and the low end kicked major ass. The sound was superb, but I think I would have liked to have a little more core/grain/mid-range eq quality to the sound. I was limited on mp's, but I'm thinking that the right mp could make it happen. I don't know why people say this horn is really big or too big. It makes a huge sound when you want it to, but it also plays ppp. Last time I checked, most horns do. This one happens to do it exceptionally well.

Willson F 3200 4p/1r - This thing is a hoss, as well. Big sound, but not overly-large. Of course, everyone has their opinions about the size of sound for F tubas. My ideal F tuba sound probably is larger than most. Low range just played itself. No notes were problematic. Period.

Willson rotary F - Took a minute to get used to the short action, and the thumb ring and paddle assembly was all wrong for my paws, but the horn was a dream to play. Solid all the way up and down. Breathe on it, and it played. Crystal clear high range, and solid low range. Intonation was very good. Wondering if Paul K's ever sold... If his plays like this one, someone will get a winner.

Tuba Exchange

Had a nice chat with Vince. I asked him about any goodies he had. He showed me a new TE non-comp euph that had a price tag just under \$900. It looked decent, and the 4 top-action valves (monel) were great. I borrowed a Schilke 51D and played a little. I do play some tbone, so I didn't struggle terribly. I'll put out the disclaimer that I'm no eupher, but IMHO, this horn played very well from top (high Bb) to low (pedal Bb). I was surprised that the intonation was very good. It looked like it was put together

well. It may very well be a good school horn, but I'd bet it would be a good non-comp for doublers who don't want/need to spend a fortune on a big-name euph.

Gronitz PCK 6/4 CC 4p/1r (SP) - OH S*&T! Where do I sign? Best BAT I've ever played, bar none. Best response of any BAT I've tried. I always wondered about the semi-circle valve alignment - it was as comfortable as I always believed it would be. Can the other manufacturers take a hint? If I ever need a BAT, and I don't have \$25K+ for a Nirschl, Yamayork, Baer, etc., the PCK will be the one. Makes me want to try a **PBK** just for grins. If I had \$10-11K that I could spend on a tuba, I'd have gone home with it.

Gemstone Music

Nirschl handmade 4/4 CC 5p/1r - Best playing 4/4 CC I've ever tried. It played itself. It is light years ahead of all the rest, and for \$25K, it damned well better be. I don't want to play my horns now that I'm home. It played so easy, so well... I see why big-time professionals can justify the purchase of horns of this caliber. Win the lotto, and I'm placing my order.

Nirschl 4/4 BBb 4v made in India - A fellow 'netter said that, "for \$4K, that horn is SCARY-GOOD." Brother, I can see why you think that way. This horn blew free and was great all around. It reminded me of playing my 1291 BBb a little. Free-blowing, good low range, and a good high range. When I plugged in my Laskey 30G, the horn lit up. High range was clearer and easier. Maybe I'm used to th 30G, but it did improve the sound in a noticeable way. Based on my short time with it, I'd say this horn could do anything I needed and then some.

Off-site

Rudy Meinl 5/4 CC 4v - After hours, I got a chance to play a Rudy Meinl 5/4. What a beast! I had just finished playing F tuba for an hour or two, so my chops weren't too good (like they ever are),

but after a little while, it started barking a little. It is a big mama, there is no doubt. The gentleman playing it earlier in the evening sure made it sound good, and he made it fit into a small ensemble just fine. I never doubted Lee Stofer's assertion that it could be played well in a small ensemble, and this fellow showed that it was certainly possible. Wonder how the Bayreuth BBb is?

Faves/take-homes of the horns I tried?

BBb - The Nirschl was great, but I have a beeper doing that job. Gotta take the Miraphone 282.

CC - There's no question that the handmade Nirschl was the best. Since that is not realistic for most of us, the PCK wins, with the Thor in 2nd place, but much more affordable.

Eb - Willson. The Norwegian Star and 2040 are no slouches at all. The Willson, however, is the one that (to borrow Roger's phrase) reached out and really shook hands with me.

F - That's a tough one. I liked the Willson a lot, but the Firebird got the biggest reaction from me. Players who want to play F tuba, but can't or don't work at it every day, have an option besides a Yammie 621 (small and bland) and a Yammie 822 (big and funky intonation). I like the way I sound on the MW's, but the Firebird is just a freak.

What horn could I realistically consider adding to my current stable: Willson 3400 Eb

Doc (who only offers his opinion, despite not being a recognized authority or a certified professional - in other words, YMMV)