

“Devoted to making musical instruments” it reads on top of Josef Gopp’s website. Of course, the brass instrument manufacturer from Lower Franconia thus stirs our interest. We are curious if his trombones are up to our expectations, after *sonic* had already had the opportunity to make sure that Gopp knows his stuff when we had reviewed his trumpets (*sonic* 3/2005).

Garden Jazz
Gopp Tenor Trombone
Model ‘J2 Jazzgarden’

By Michael Donner

History

To many trombonists Josef Gopp is probably unknown. As a master craftsman specializing in brass instruments, he produces his instruments mainly by hand in the idyllic village of Lohr-Sackenbach, located between Aschaffenburg and Würzburg. Josef Gopp started his own business in 2000. The tenor trombone in question, which bears the unusual name ‘Jazzgarden’, is taken from a range of brass instruments each uniquely crafted by Gopp. It was this dedication that induced him to start his own business and make his numerous inspirations a reality, as he writes himself. His devotion to details and the suggestions of professional musicians specializing in classical music, jazz or folk music are combined in his high-grade brass instruments.

Specifications

The model ‘J2’ jazz trombone is, as is implied by its categorization, a small tenor trombone, ‘small’ referring, of course, to the bore and the bell. The cylindrical tube profile measures 12.7 mm, which is typical for this configuration. The bell diameter is given as 190 mm. On the reviewed specimen both the inner and outer slides are made of nickel silver. The inner one is chrome-plated while the outer one is lacquered, which is typical for an instrument like this one. A brass outer slide is optionally available. The bow is crafted in brass and is also lacquered, of course.

The slide casings are also made of brass. The general configuration and the visual impression of the slide bear a resemblance to trombone slides by Yamaha. The neckpipe – the connecting piece between slide and main tubing (bell including tuning slide) – is engineered as one piece with the tuning slide on the ‘J2’ so that, according to Josef Gopp, airflow and intonation of natural tones are improved. The most interesting and striking features of this trombone are the two nickel silver crossbraces between neckpipe/tuning slide and the rear part of the bell next to the tuning slide. They run diagonally to leave room for the balancer to be put in the ideal spot, a layout sometimes found in old Buescher or Conn trombones. The sturdy, compact balancer, crafted in red brass, is another eye-catcher. It is soldered to the narrow side of the tuning slide. Both between the neckpipe and the tuning slide’s narrow and wide side, a nickel silver casing is fitted as a connecting piece. Last, but not least, there is the bell. As already mentioned, it has a small layout and is completely carried out in brass and lacquered.

Response, acoustic properties and build quality

I always find it interesting to read how manufacturers attempt to describe their own products. On the American market this is far more usual than here. Giving a definite characterization of any particular instrument may be misleading as the personal taste of the player and his

approach to playing may differ tremendously from the next one's. As a consequence, one cannot learn much about the acoustic properties and response of the instrument in question from the actual manufacturers in most cases. They let the instruments speak for themselves. I find the fact all the more delightful that Josef Gopp's description of his jazz trombone 'J2' strikes the right note and coincides with my experiences gained blowing it. Here for once someone seems to know exactly what he is writing about. For example: "A powerful and lively-sounding tone throughout the tonal range, together with a well-balanced intonation and ready response" – on the basis of what I found out myself about the instrument I have to agree for the most part. The tone is indeed quite powerful; it is very robust and handles playing at high air pressures really well. With a larger mouthpiece (inner diameter similar to 6 1/2AL) the tone did grow noticeably flatter with increased application of pressure from an intermediate register upwards, but the trombone is not necessarily built for this kind of combination (small bore – larger mouthpiece). The "well-balanced intonation and ready response", however, I can absolutely confirm – especially when using the J. Klier mouthpiece 11 C that came with the instrument or a similar mouthpiece with a small cup. The description goes on to say: "the new balancer allows for a wonderfully stable grip of the instrument" – again I have to agree whole-heartedly and add that, to my mind, this is a detail much neglected in many trombones. It is details like this one that strike one in handcrafted instruments and that set them apart from off-the-shelf ones. Here, the balancer deserves its name. Surveying the trombone's build quality, one finds no less than a masterfully crafted instrument engineered with great effort and precision, neatly soldered and well thought-out. Real effort went into this.

Conclusion

A great instrument! I found it interesting to see what is going on on the jazz trombone market. I am looking forward to future developments in Josef Gopp's range of jazz trombones.

Product details and prices

Manufacturer:	Josef Gopp
Model:	'J2 Jazzgarden'
Technical specifications:	Lacquered brass bell (190 mm), nickel silver slide (12.7 mm), brass tuning bow
Included:	Trombone J. Klier 11C mouthpiece Slide-O-Mix Classic (slide lubricant)
Optional layouts:	Gold brass bell, lacquered or gold-plated; silver-plated brass; brass slide; exchangeable mouthpipes
Price:	1,920 Euro (layout reviewed)

www.josefgopp.de

Pros and cons:

+ Great build quality

- + Great response, great intonation
- + Great value for price