

# BEST BRASS

Building The Best Brass Possible, With Cost As No Object

JAPAN'S BEST BRASS makes unapologetically high-end instruments for discriminating professionals, serious students, and all players looking for something highly distinctive. Best Brass founder Shinji Hamanaga spent 18 years building Yamaha's reputation as a producer of world-class brass instruments. Though at the time he was best known as a French horn designer, his design work there touched everything "from trumpet to tuba." After leaving Yamaha, Hamanaga founded Best Brass Corporation in 1999.

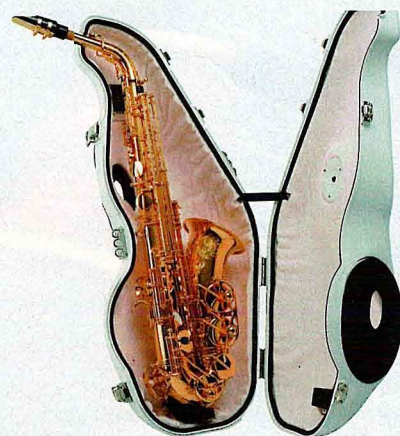
Best Brass makes trumpets, piccolo trumpets, "pocket" trumpets, heraldic trumpets, and cornets. All manufacturing is done at the company's factory in Hamamatsu, Japan. Artemis Series trumpets feature a somewhat traditional design and feel. The company's premium Aiolia Series trumpets offer cutting-edge design features, more weight, and, according to the company, a big, "dignified" sound. At the 2011 winter NAMM show in Anaheim Best Brass will introduce its new Aphrodite line of ultralightweight trumpets.

In general, Best Brass instruments are gaining notoriety in orchestral and jazz music circles for their stable intonation at all dynamic levels, smooth, easy blow feel, and responsiveness. These characteristics are attributed to the revolutionary Hamanaga Valve System. International Sales & Marketing Director Kota Hamanaga (Shinji's son)

explains that the valve system found on most modern-day brass instruments was invented about 100 years ago and "has-



*Best Brass Aiolia Series trumpets.*



*Best Brass e-Sax, "the world's smallest soundproof room."*

n't changed at all." Shinji Hamanaga reimagined the system to address age-old problems. "The Hamanaga Valve system achieves very natural resonance," says Kota.

Best Brass has only just begun to win recognition for its unique brass instruments. However, the company's brass-wind accessories already enjoy considerable acclaim. In 1995 Shinji Hamanaga developed Yamaha's groundbreaking SilentBrass practice tools. Fascinated with shaping brass instruments' sound without distorting their fundamental musicality, he has since continued to develop innovative products for Best Brass's "sound transformer" line. Best Brass e-Brass mutes, available for a wide range of instruments, are critically acclaimed for their ability to reduce a horn's sonic output equally in all registers without altering pitch or intonation and with little added wind resistance or tonal coloration. The Best Brass e-Brass Electronic Mute, designed to be played through headphones, features a built-in metronome and a three-way echo switch. The company's Warm-Up mute series has also proven hugely popular.

In 2005 the company introduced its revolutionary e-Sax. Dubbed "the world's smallest soundproof room," the e-Sax surrounds an alto or tenor saxophone and "contains" its sound, again, without affecting its pitch, intonation, or tone. The player listens to the instrument through headphones. Top professionals rave about the e-Sax enabling them to practice in situations—in apartments, late at night, etc.—that would otherwise not be possible. (Presumably this attribute would be very attractive to

many parents as well.) Strong sales of the e-Sax drove the company to relocate to a new larger facility in 2006.

Best Brass also designs and manufactures a full line of brass instrument mouthpieces including models for trumpet, cornet, flugelhorn, trombone, bass trombone, euphonium, and French Horn. It additionally offers a line of "mid-shank" adaptors. The new Groove Series features a special design structure, called the Groove, at the throat of the mouthpiece that makes higher notes

easier to hit and lower registers more stable, enabling musicians to play for longer periods.

Best Brass mouthpieces also defy convention by featuring a different length depending on the cup size: The deeper the cup, the shorter the length. The first benefit is that the pitch always remains centered, facilitating quick mouthpiece changes without retuning. The resulting additional benefit is that eliminating the need for extreme tuning slide positions allows the horn to resonate more freely

and completely. (For more on Best Brass Groove Series mouthpieces, visit [http://www.bestbrass.jp/en/mouthpiece/pdf/the\\_groove.pdf](http://www.bestbrass.jp/en/mouthpiece/pdf/the_groove.pdf).)

Kota Hamanaga admits that Best Brass trumpets aren't inexpensive but he suggests that they're "good bait for luring customers" to music retail shops, and that "high-level players seeking a truly extraordinary instrument will pay to own 'the Best.'"

[www.bestbrass.jp/en/](http://www.bestbrass.jp/en/)