

Zen and the Art of Trumpet Maintenance

Trumpets enjoy a history almost as long and varied as flutes. From before the walls of Jericho to post modern... Although I admit that I lean toward Diz as at least one of the major pinnacles. As in the student instruments, anything that closes the bore and restricts your airflow must be corrected. Also, a dent in the bell stresses the metal and does not allow it to resonate as it should.

The biggest difference is in the many and varied shapes available in modern professional trumpets. How many lead pipes are available? How many different bells, and made from what materials? It's an ongoing process to understand the point behind a radial curve or graduated taper.

There are several skill sets involved in taking on repairs for the professional, from metallurgy to philosophy. There are as many ways to remove a dent as there are to insert one. During removal, it is important to choose the correct method. You have to know the metal, and know how it will react. There is also proper alignment of ports, in piston and rotor valves. Last but not least is assembly or disassembly requiring soldering, which is a technique that really takes decades to truly master.

Whether it's upgrading to a new pipe or relaxing the stress from creased metal, the best jobs are invisible. The goal is to make it look and respond like no damage ever happened.

Mods mods mods

I've swapped a bell and pipe configuration for a player who had lost a right hand and wanted a left handed trumpet. We also added a custom bracket that he could grip with his hook. He was really happy with the result. Note – this can only be done on certain brands.

New pipes and new bells are no problem – including the Schilke tunable bells.

One favorite is chopping a Bb horn to play in the key of C. Yes it can be done!

I admit I have done more than one Diz style raised bell, though you have to mod a double case for it to fit.