

# Best Brass e-Brass IV Trumpet

## *Electronically Enhanced Practice Mute*

The e-Brass IV Trumpet is a new practice mute (or whisper mute) from Japan-based Best Brass Corp. It maintains the functionality of a quiet, resistive practice mute while actually having built-in circuitry to amplify a trumpet and output its natural sound to headphones or an audio system. The e-Brass IV is the latest incarnation in the company's sound transformer mute series.

Best Brass has billed the e-Brass IV as “the world’s smallest and lightest e-mute.” Its small footprint does make it just a shade larger than a pixie mute, and even with two AA batteries, it weighs less than a metal straight mute. There are 3 inches of firm, tackified rubber surrounding the shaft that creates a nice, tight seal, even without the customary exhale into the bell.

When inserted, the mute extrudes about 1 inch from the edge of the bell. This is the housing for all of the controls. Aside from a small on/off switch, there are three jacks available. One is a standard headphone jack, and one is a line out to connect to an external speaker. There is also a line-in jack if you want to play along with your favorite “music minus one” recording from your smartphone or tablet. The volume and echo dials are also situated here. When inserted at a convenient angle, the player can easily adjust both dials with one hand while playing the horn with the other.

My first experience with the e-Brass IV was without the headphones, and subsequently I compared it to my Denis Wick practice mute. The e-mute was a bit more restrictive and did not resonate as much due to its plastic body. I did notice it was moderately softer than the metal practice mute. I quickly plugged in a decent pair of headphones, turned it on and played a few phrases. I advise you set the volume before you play, as the numbers on the dial are tiny and difficult to read.

The sound production was remarkable. As my ears registered the full sound of the horn, my chops tended to ignore the resistance, and playing felt quite natural. I listened intently as I moved the echo effect dial. At zero, the sound was natural but dry. Any air in my tone or imprecision with my attacks seemed disproportionately amplified. Increasing the echo to the maximum created an electronically induced atmosphere suitable for playing along with



'70s avant-garde rock recordings. I finally optimized the reverb to the point where it felt similar to playing in a small room with no carpeting or other sound-dampening materials. After playing a while, my chops noticed that not all registers behaved equally when playing at different intensity levels. F on top of the staff was flat when played soft, and F within the staff had to be lipped down to be in tune.

The compact e-Brass IV plays well and travels. It's very satisfying to hear a full brass sound when your decibel level is restricted—such as when family members may be working or sleeping—and it leads to more productive practice sessions. I would definitely recommend this new e-mute to the working trumpet professional.

—Dave Ruth

Ordering info: [bestbrass.jp](http://bestbrass.jp)