

## Odyssey Debut E-flat Tenor Horn (OTH1000)

In recent years the flurry of reasonably priced flurry-looking instruments arriving on our shores means that we are no longer exclusively buying and renting the student lines from established manufacturers like Bach, Yamaha and Besson. The marketplace is now full of instruments with shop and designer names of which Odyssey, the brand name of designer Peter Pollard, is one. My first instrument, a Bach 'Bundy' that my parents rented from Gwent Music in Newport, cost £350 in 1986. That's £900 today. Incredible, then, that I'm about to tell you all about a tenor horn from Peter Pollard's Odyssey brand that costs just £500 in 2024!

But will the quality reflect the price tag? Let's find out.

First, let's just establish what a tenor horn is. Despite the name, it's actually an alto instrument, pitched in E flat, and is an established essential solo and section brass-band instrument. It's also used by the mounted bands

of the British Army on parade, and is an alternative or addition to the French horn in the concert band. It can also be a very useful switch for French horn in the brass quintet. It employs the same valve system as the trumpet, and has a middle-sized mouthpiece, smaller than trombone and larger than trumpet. It's a great choice for children or as a starting point, because it's relatively easy to hold (due to its small tuba design) and it has a conical bore, meaning a new player can quite quickly produce a pleasing sound.

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I have compared this Odyssey Debut with my Besson Sovereign, which is a well-established professional instrument found in the hands of the world's best players and costs just over eight times the price. The Odyssey has

a tough act to follow.

Out of the case, the Odyssey valves are really good and worked properly, straight out of the plastic wrapper, and not in that gooey 'needs a good clean' brand-new-instrument way. The version I'm reviewing is in lacquer, so it looks gold (polished brass) and the level of finish hasn't been scrimped on. Wherever there is a silver-plated joint, I don't detect any bleed or solder mess – something that can't be said for other budget instruments I've dealt with. It looks and feels

far greater quality than the price would suggest. I noticed the addition of protective patches on the bottom bow and the top-side bow, which should also help to avoid those little dings that 'just happen'. Great thinking!

The instrument is the same design as the Besson down to the internals of the valves, but this doesn't always equate to playing characteristics to match. That's true here, but to a lesser extent than I expected. The £4,000 Besson is a little more reactive to details of articulation and has a lighter, more effervescent quality to the sound; but that's not to say the Odyssey doesn't behave well. The articulations are clean, and the sound has a dark quality and an ease when working up through the register. The very highest notes take a little more work, but they are there and absolutely usable. The intonation is very close to its more expensive cousin, and on the tuning machine



it performs impeccably. The notes all fall where you expect, and it's not going to be doing anything it shouldn't for the players using it, be that as a beginner or at a more advanced stage.

It comes with a mouthpiece that's a little on the small side for my taste, but will easily work for those initial years of playing. The case is perfectly functional and light, has backpack straps and will do the job of protecting the instrument in the boot of the car or on the bus. It would have been a good idea to make the external pocket large enough to take a method book or the band A4 folder, to avoid them being left at home or lost. That's a shame; but it does come with a cleaning cloth, some white gloves, and a small bottle of valve oil. It also has a lyre box for marching with music – you just need to buy a lyre.

The Odyssey Debut tenor horn has outperformed my expectations: it develops a solid and warm sound, it's easy to articulate and it's in tune. At this price point, and several above, it is well worth considering, and for a beginner or a youth band, it's a winner. **MT**

**JONATHAN PIPPEN**

**ODYSSEY DEBUT  
TENOR HORN  
(OTH1000)**

