

JodyJazz DV NY Alto and DV Baritone Sax Mouthpieces

In general, my saxophone mouthpieces are like airport security: metal is usually not encouraged. It's not that I dislike the sound of metal. In fact, I *do* like it, especially in contemporary settings. It's just that metal mouthpieces come at a cost—more on that later. Yet if anyone is capable of changing my view, it's Jody Espina (a.k.a. JodyJazz). I have had the pleasure of playing and reviewing a number of JodyJazz mouthpieces, including the inaugural offering from the DV and DVNY lines (both tenor mouthpieces). So reviewing two “siblings” (a DVNY alto mouthpiece and a DV baritone model) was not so much about testing the abilities of the design, but rather transposing the idea to other saxophones.

Just to recap, both the DV (pictured) and DVNY mouthpieces feature 24kt gold plating and a unique double-window design that offers the reed greater vibration. The DV offers a brighter, more contemporary sound and the DVNY gives a more traditional, deeper sound due to a deeper chamber. Descending from brightest to darkest, the line goes DV, ESP, DVNY and HR.

I found both mouthpieces to be well made, producing full, vibrant sounds with excellent pitch and scale. However, both mouthpieces presented some deception from the player's perspective. Familiar with the ESP alto model, I expected the DVNY alto to be a bit more spread. I enjoyed the sound a great deal, but felt it lacked the projection necessary for big-

band work. I was wrong. When forced to fill in for one of my absent jazz-band students, I discovered that the mouthpiece not only projected very well, it also offered a wonderful sense of complexity to the section's sound. Those players looking for a “vintage” Meyer sound, with the flexibility to play both edgy and spread, will love this mouthpiece. The DVNY has tremendous flexibility and color. You can play like Bird one minute and Lee Konitz the next.

Like the DVNY alto mouthpiece, I found the DV baritone model to be a bit deceptive. When playing the DV tenor mouthpieces, I enjoyed its bright edge and contemporary sound, but I wondered if this edginess would be too much for the baritone saxophone. When I first played the piece I noticed the brightness and high overtones. Having everyone in the saxophone section stop and stare at me didn't help either. Then, one of the tenor players said, “That is the fattest bari sound I have ever heard. What are you playing on?” That's when I knew I needed to record myself. What I discovered was that the higher baffle in the DV baritone model doesn't just help with projection, but also adds overtones and depth to the sound. If you want to get a Gerry Mulligan-type sound, the DV is not for you. But don't despair—Espina claims DVNY soprano and baritone mouthpieces are on the horizon.

Both mouthpieces worked well with a variety of reeds. I found the DVNY alto worked better with reeds that had more heart. Reeds that were too thin often worked on the DVNY, but at the expense of projection. The baritone model was a different story. It accepted just about anything and with each reed you got a different identity. The stronger the reed, the more edge and woodiness you would hear; the softer the reed, the more buzz and tubbiness in the sound. I threw some absolute junk at the DV bari mouthpiece and it took everything I gave. It may be the best metal bari mouthpiece available on the market.

The jazz mouthpiece market is built around the tenor player. But the true test of craftsmanship comes in the ability to adapt a concept to the idiosyncrasies of the “other”

saxophones. This brings me back to why I dislike metal. Too often you have to sacrifice comfort and flexibility for projection, especially with alto mouthpieces. I didn't find this to be the case at all with these two mouthpieces. In fact, if you are a player who likes a wider mouthpiece, you will appreciate these DV models. The only negative is the price. With the baritone selling online for \$550 and the alto for \$450, you better be serious about playing. Starving artists will have to get a bit thinner if they want that killer sound.

One has to wonder how much more there is do with the saxophone mouthpiece. Espina has gone from traditional hard rubber to space-age metal and everything else in between. Rest assured, there will be more from JodyJazz. **PAUL HAAR**

Zildjian K Custom Hybrid Cymbals

There are new additions to the Avedis Zildjian Company's K Custom Hybrid Series, the award-winning line designed with Japanese drummer Akira Jimbo. A fusion specialist, Jimbo said in a press release that “brilliance and darkness co-exist” in his 21st-century offshoot of the modern K Custom Series, which updated the historic K Zildjians.

The K line was originally developed in Turkey by Kerop Zildjian in the 19th century, and became the company's signature jazz item during the 20th century. Drummers like Art Blakey, Max Roach, Elvin Jones and Tony Williams simmered on K hi-hats, crashes and rides, helping to write jazz history while using the cymbals' dark, expressive tones.

Jimbo's initial hybrid design featured 13 1/4-inch hi-hats, nine- and 11-inch splashes, 17- and 19-inch crashes, a 19-inch China and a 20-inch ride. The series won a 2006 Musikmesse International Press Award, through voting by 80 different music magazines worldwide, as the best new cymbal series. Its brand-new additions are 14 1/4-inch hi-hats, 15-, 16- and 18-inch crashes, and a 17-inch China cymbal.

The hybrid design is an attempt to innovate and update the K line to achieve “maximum versatility.” Since the fusion Jimbo prefers is obviously much louder than acoustic jazz, his idea of a versatile meeting of bright and dark is unique. And the hybrids

