

JodyJazz DV CHI Metal Tenor Saxophone Mouthpiece

Sometimes the claims made by saxophone mouthpiece makers sound dangerously close to those of the snake-oil salesman: Just one dose of our product will not only cure all of your ills, it will make your life better! Even though I'm familiar with JodyJazz mouthpieces, I was still taken aback by Jody Espina's boasts that his new tenor DV CHI (CHI for Chicago) has a "Bigger Fatter Tone, Effortless Playing, More Harmonics, Cleaner Articulation, Power and Projection, Unbelievable Altissimo [and] Improved Intonation."

But the modern tenor player is just too fragile a creature to resist such assertions. We have dedicated our lives to the quest for the "perfect" mouthpiece, and we're not afraid to drain our bank account for that search. While I'm not ready to say that Espina has made the perfect mouthpiece, he has clearly delivered on his promises.

The newest addition to the JodyJazz DV line falls somewhere between the modern-sounding DV and the vintage sound of the DV NY. Like its siblings, the DV CHI is constructed using the same *Phi* proportions—*Phi* refers to the enigmatic "golden ratio" used by Renaissance artists and artisans—and incorporates the elongated secondary window that made the DV line notable. Unlike other models, this mouthpiece is plated with a hand-finished baffle and scalloped chamber: This design allows more air production with less harshness, and helps the DV CHI produce one of the fullest and richest sounds I've heard from a modern mouthpiece. (The model available in tip-opening sizes 7, 7* and 8; a 7* is reviewed here.)

Simply put, the DV CHI has the most effortless playability of any mouthpiece I've ever encountered. Throughout the registers the sound is earthy and full, with a nice balance of edge and depth. The only sound I can compare it to is that of the great Dexter Gordon: It produces that type of complexity and richness, where you can literally

feel the overtones in the sound. I was able to use a variety of reed strengths, each producing different colors and textures. Intonation presented a challenge until I realized that I didn't have to compensate anymore: Unlike my regular mouthpiece, which has some pitch issues, the DV CHI is spot on.

I especially enjoyed playing the mouthpiece in the altissimo register. Even mushy reeds brought out a crispness in the articulation, and I was able to play four octaves with little effort. If you understand how to create altissimo, the DV CHI is going to be your best friend.

As wonderful as this mouthpiece is, it is not without some drawbacks. The DV CHI comes with JodyJazz's new metal ring ligature that slips over the reed and mouthpiece and is held in place by compression. It's a simple design, available in blackened brass, sterling-silver-plated brass and gold-plated brass, but it makes this mouthpiece sing. Unfortunately it renders the DV CHI a bit incompatible: When I tried using the Rovner ligatures of other DV models, it left the mouthpiece feeling flat and lifeless; this was also the case when I used metal screw-type ligatures.

Another shortcoming of the ring ligature is that you can't place your ligature higher on the mouthpiece; you are instead at the mercy of reed thickness. Also, after using the mouthpiece for a few minutes I began to notice significant scuffing of the silver plating. This doesn't affect the quality of the sound, but if you're into keeping your mouthpiece shiny and new, you're out of luck. Finally, if you have too thick a neck cork and try to move the mouthpiece, plan on moving the reed if the ligature isn't on tightly.

My last gripe is the price: At \$595, this is one expensive 'piece. It has a great vintage sound, but at this price

point goes head to head with prized Otto Links and Meyers. Surely the DV CHI is so costly because it has a hand-finished tip, baffle and table (worked on and play tested by Espina himself). If you think you want to sample perfection, you'll have to drop some cash.

So who will this mouthpiece appeal to? Just about any tenorman who has spent more on classic Blue Note recordings than on food. Players working with electronics and big bands will find that the DV CHI meets the demands of a ballad yet still has the wattage to compete with the rest of the band. If you want to walk on the cool side and explore your inner-Stan Getz, however, you may have to work a bit too hard. (I would recommend the DV NY for that type of playing.) So, the million-dollar question: Is JodyJazz's DV CHI mouthpiece perfect? No, but it's close enough. **PAUL HAAR**



Blue Suede Straps

The D'Addario-owned Rico reed and accessory line is now offering straps that should appeal to any saxophonist who digs those great old Blue Note LPs—in other words, any saxophonist at all. Available in lengths for soprano/alto and tenor/baritone are sax straps featuring the artwork of four classic (if less recognized) albums from the legendary label: Kenny Dorham's *Afro-Cuban*, Andrew Hill's *Black Fire* featuring Joe Henderson, and Tina Brooks' *True Blue* with Freddie Hubbard. The straps also boast suede lining, a slide adjuster and the brand's singular curved hook. \$26 each. ricoreeds.com