

JodyJazz HR* Custom Dark Alto, Soprano

Warm-Sounding, Easy-Blowing Hard Rubber Saxophone Mouthpieces

JodyJazz has added alto and soprano models to its line of HR* Custom Dark saxophone mouthpieces. The HR* Custom Dark Alto and Soprano are made with premium hard rubber and share the same dark, vintage sound characteristics as the company's popular tenor saxophone model. The alto version comes in sizes 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 tip openings, while the soprano is available in sizes 5, 5*, 6, 6*, 7, 7* and 8.

The HR* Custom Dark line is crafted from a special hard rubber formula that was developed for JodyJazz's Chedeville brand of classical mouthpieces. The material helps to impart more warmth and beauty in the sound due to its purity and density.

As I warmed up the alto piece (with a size 7 tip opening) for play-testing on my French-made vintage horn, I remarked at just how different the instrument sounded than when I outfitted it with any of the bright-sounding metal and rubber alto mouthpieces that are so ubiquitous today. In the absence of artificial sizzle, I could really hear — and feel — the true core tone and unadorned resonance of my horn. I found myself submerged in a world of old-school tonal purity, suitable for classical chamber music or vintage cool-jazz. Although the piece took me into a sonic realm that's more subdued than what I'm used to, I experienced warmth, calm and in-the-zone focus while exploring the tonal nuances and shadings offered by the HR* Custom Dark Alto.

A test-drive on the HR* Custom Dark Soprano (also a size 7) was sim-

ilarly revelatory. My Japanese-made curved soprano was virtually transformed from a pitch-stubborn, shrill adversary into an in-tune, accommodating friend. I liked the feeling of being able to “center” the highest notes of the soprano, and bell tones rang out with surprising ease.

HR* Custom Dark mouthpieces all feature a gold-plated brass ring on the shank of the mouthpiece, which adds mass to give the player a boost of body and increased harmonics. They use a roll-over baffle to provide sufficient “pop” without any harsh highs, and they feature an large chamber and bore for the ultimate in mellowness. Rounded sidewalls add a desirable complexity to the tone.

The most surprising thing about these dark-sounding mouthpieces is how free-blowing they are. Their wide-open response can be credited to the advanced design of their facing curves, as well as their expertly hand-finished tip rails, baffles and tables.

—Ed Enright

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