

JodyJazz DV HR Alto Saxophone Mouthpiece

Harmonious Invention, Embedded Bite Plate, Ease of Play & Beautiful Expression

My first impression of the new DV HR series Alto mouthpiece from JodyJazz led directly to a verbal outburst of understated praise — “It plays!” — from this reviewer. That’s how enlightening it is to play the DV HR, which is the company’s first hard rubber mouthpiece to feature its patented DV design. The piece not only responds with surprising ease, but it’s capable of making the alto sing, sob, burn, flutter, whisper and scream with more conviction than I previously thought was even possible. It jump-started my vintage French-made alto back to life and drove me to play for hours. It was an invigorating experience to say the least, one that I shared with some dyed-in-the-wool alto pros who have spent years playing trusty Meyers and Claude Lakeys — and they all found something they loved about the DV HR Alto, too.

The DV HR opens a new chapter for the company’s established-DV line, which began life when JodyJazz founder and president Jody Espina first applied the Golden Mean (phi) proportions found in nature to the design of his metal saxophone mouthpieces. With the DV series, Espina created what became one of the most sought-after mouthpieces among jazz and commercial players across the globe. Now, for the first time, those seemingly magical proportions are available in a hard rubber medium.

The patented DV secondary window design, which can be found just below the primary window on the flat undersurface where the table meets the reed, adds mid and low harmonics to the saxophone’s sound. The DV HR Alto can deftly cover a full sonic spectrum, from ringing brightness to subdued dark tones — and is capable of supporting a player through long, flighty phrases and the prettiest of ballads. Altissimo notes speak strong and clearly, and feel firmly supported in their sometimes tenuous “slots,” which even the most accomplished players can find elusive. The meticulously finished facing curve, which fosters tonal flexibility and a substantial amount of thrust, is also inspired by Golden Mean proportions, as are many other design specifications.

The DV HR Alto is available in size 5, 6, 7 and 8 tip openings. I tried the size 6, aiming for a workable combination of control (of paramount importance with any mouthpiece) and power (which lead alto players consistently crave and often require). Outfitting the DV HR Alto with a medium-strength cane reed and a JodyJazz Power Ring ligature (for a precise fit, maximum vibration and boosted harmonics), I was able to achieve a huge sound with an all-enveloping

tonal presence. The bell tones of my alto, which I love to milk for sub-tone coolness and brassy blasts, resonated with a palpable heft that renewed my interest in exploring the low range of my horn. “Imagine what kinds of results a strong, dedicated alto player could get with the larger sizes of the DV HR Alto,” I thought to myself, glad I had chosen the easily manageable size 6.

“The DV HR is very free blowing, with all the power you will ever need, along with that big bottom that the DVs are famous for,” said Espina. “Now you get all of that in a hard rubber mouthpiece, which gives you the shape that you are used to with the added warmth and beauty of hard rubber. As soon as you play this new mouthpiece, I’m confident that you’ll feel that it’s the greatest hard rubber mouthpiece you’ve ever played.”

With the new DV HR Alto model, JodyJazz is also introducing its newest bite plate technology. It’s the first JodyJazz hard rubber mouthpiece to feature a bite plate that’s embedded into the beak of the mouthpiece. (Applying a clear mouthpiece cushion on top of the bite plate is recommended for longevity’s sake.) The plate features the iconic “Phi” symbol logo in gold, a characteristic of the classic DV series. It features a gold-plated brass ring on the shank with a distinctive profile that was also created using Golden Mean proportions. The brass ring adds more mass

on the shank of the mouthpiece, which results in increased stability, more body in the sound and increased harmonics, according to Espina.

The free-blowing response and crisp note attacks of the DV HR Alto are due to its optimized facing curve and hand-finished tip rail, baffle and table. Each mouthpiece is individually play-tested to ensure consistency and quality. The one I tried arrived by mail ready to wail.

The hard-rubber material of the DV HR Alto makes all the difference in the world. It gives the mouthpiece old-school, comfortable feel with an easily “grippable” shape and size that allows alto players to relax their chops and focus on priorities like tonal shading and executing highly stylized jazz inflections. The hard rubber also introduces more tonal warmth to the overall DV sound.

The JodyJazz DV HR Alto has an MSRP of \$450, and it comes with a deluxe mouthpiece pouch. A monumental alto mouthpiece at this price comes around only once or twice in an age, so if you’re serious about the instrument, it would be well worth your while to take one for a test-drive and discover its impressive capabilities and capacity for nuanced expression.

—Ed Enright

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