

MAY, 2018 DOWNBEAT TOOLSHED REVIEW OF SDT-XR 52 TENOR SAXOPHONE

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Sax Dakota SDT-XR 52 Tenor Saxophone *Highly Responsive, Aesthetically Detailed*

The SDT-XR 52 Tenor Saxophone from Sax Dakota is an ergonomically designed, aesthetically detailed and highly responsive instrument. It's the company's top-line tenor, made of raw bronze with a semi-matte Black Onyx finish on the body, bow and bell and a bright Black Onyx finish on the inside of the bell.

The SDT-XR 52's neck is silver-plated, and the keywork, trim and grille-style keyguards are unfinished, sporting a distinct art deco-like design. The neck and bell are decorated with attractive hand-engraving. The raw bronze body of the SDT-XR 52 is essentially a brass alloy with increased copper content (77 percent), resulting in a smooth and highly resonant sound that's highly reminiscent of certain post-World War II vintage horns. Playing it, I experienced a pleasing feeling of vibration in the instrument's body, even on upper-stack fingerings.

The SDT-XR 52 responded well and played nicely in tune with two different types of mouthpieces: a hard-rubber Vandoren Jumbo Java #7 and metal Jody Jazz Super Jet matched with #2½ and #3 Vandoren Java Red Box reeds. I got the strongest projection and altissimo response with the metal mouthpiece and #3 reed, and the hard-rubber mouthpiece with #2½ reed was my favored setup for subtone and warmth. The SDT-XR 52 felt consistently reliable in articulation at all volume levels with both types of mouthpieces.

The keys of the SDT-XR 52 are well-placed for ease of fingering and rapid playing. The left-hand little-finger bank is especially nimble. Three

neckstrap attachment rings are provided (like on the old King Zephyr saxophone models), and I was pleased to find that choosing one over another really did make a difference in airstream control and physical comfort.

Additional professional touches include a conveniently located front high-F lever, an adjustable right-hand thumb rest and a high F# key. Stainless steel key rods help enhance the action. Black oxide steel springs and pivot screws team with custom Italian pads and tone boosters. The reinforced double arms on the low C/B/B-flat keys, along with Pisoni Pro key pads, are designed to aid response and ensure consistent tone. Adjustment screws are placed at critical points. The SDT-XR 52 has a specially designed neck taper and a graduated bell flare that begins at the bottom bow and collar.

The SDT-XR 52 comes in a reinforced, vintage-looking tweed-exterior or wood case with a plush interior blanket for extra cushioning and protection.

—Bruce Gibson
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