

2012 Reed and Mouthpiece Overview

From jazz soloists to orchestral first chairs, reed and mouthpiece products are always at the front of many of many musicians' minds, even if it's been years since they last bought a new instrument. The category is always expanding, and a wide selection of these products can help any retailer generate foot traffic and create new profits. The demand for reed and mouthpieces is one thing shops can count on.

Though the basic mechanics remain the same, every year brings new approaches to materials and construction that go into creating the best and most suitable sound for every player imaginable. Traditional cane and hard rubber are still prevalent, but pioneering uses for synthetics, hybrids, and precious metals mean there's always something interesting to watch for with this group. This issue, *MMR* takes a wide look at the field of current reed, mouthpiece, and ligature makers.

DANSR / Vandoren

Vandoren has been making reeds and mouthpieces since 1905. A family business in its third generation, the company is now managed by Bernard Van Doren, the grandson of the founder. While music making is strongly entrenched in the Van Doren family, Bernard became an engineer and has used those skills to improve every part of the growing and manufacturing process.

The Masters mouthpiece is unlike any other Vandoren mouthpiece, featuring a unique chamber design built to deliver a more round, even sound from the lowest to the highest register. The response and intonation are Vandoren, but these mouthpieces are different down to the ligature. Since the outer shape of the mouthpiece is conical, allowing the unique chamber design, it requires its own ligature called the "Masters M|O" ligature. The Masters M|O is part of the new line of M|O ligatures that takes the highly effective channel system from the Masters ligature and couples that with the popular Optimum screw set that pulls evenly from both sides of the mouthpiece.

Between the firm holding channel system and the Optimum screw, the M|O is designed to provide unprecedented response and tone quality in a light, single screw application.

www.vandoren.com



Rico Reeds

The nearly 90-year-old Rico Reeds was started by a clarinetist at Walt Disney studios in Los Angeles named Frank De Michele, whose uncle Joseph Rico sent him reed cane from France. The company went on to create widely successful lines of products – everything from reeds and mouthpieces to straps and other accessories. Since 2004, when Rico joined the D'Addario family, Rico has tripled the size of their company-owned plantations in France and Argentina so that 100 percent of their cane is grown on their own land. The company maintains that this allows them to ensure the highest quality of raw material used to create their reeds. Rico is a company dedicated to using technological innovation, engineering, and research to produce the best possible products. That dedication

led them to invest millions in automated blanking machines – the most precise reed production system in the world – and precision milling machines.

Rico's latest product is the new Rico Reserve – the world's first 100 percent precision-milled rod rubber, vintage-inspired B♭ clarinet mouthpiece and was designed with inspiration from some of the great mouthpieces from the 1920's. The Reserve mouthpiece combines vintage design with special, highly accurate production techniques to provide the perfect balance of tone and feel. There are three options of tip opening to meet the demands of the most discriminating artist, including 1.00, 1.05, and 1.10. Rico reeds are made in the USA and are available in a variety of cuts and strengths. Many of the artists involved in creating



the Reserve mouthpiece, including Mark Nuccio of the NY Philharmonic, Lee Livengood of the Utah Symphony, and Richie Hawley of Rice University, also helped design (and now exclusively use) Reserve reeds.

www.ricoreeds.com

Martin Lesher

The Martin Lesher Reed Company has been producing high quality double reeds for more than three decades. Their standard oboe and bassoon reeds are made in five strengths (soft, medium soft, medium, medium hard,

and hard). For those who prefer wired oboe reeds, the company offers these in medium soft, medium, and medium hard strengths. They also make Martin Lesher Artist oboe and bassoon reeds, and Martin



Lesher Pro oboe reeds - all in medium hard. The company welcomes new dealers and offer free shipping on orders prepaid by check or Visa or Mastercard.

www.martinlesher.com

Légère

Légère Reeds began in 1998 and is focused on creating premium synthetic clarinet and saxophone reeds. They're currently played by members of the Berlin Philharmonic and Vienna Philharmonic orchestras as well as having seen action in over 50 Broadway shows. Their patented Signature Series reeds have an almost invisible spine down the center allowing the reed to vibrate not only vertically but also across the tip thereby simulating a very high end cane reed.

The company has also created an educational program



called Sound Results, which allows Légère to give reeds at no cost to schools or programs in poor areas to kids who cannot afford to buy them.

The company has recently redesigned its logo for elegant displays and packaging. It is also looking forward to the release of a new Baritone Saxophone Signature Series Reed, replacing the current design, as well as the unveiling of its first bassoon reed, which is currently being evaluated in test markets around the world.

www.legere.com

Emerald

Many generations of double reed players have used Emerald Reeds. Available at a reasonable price, our oboe and bassoon reeds are made from the finest French cane and are offered in five playing strengths - soft, medium soft, medium, medium hard, and hard. In addition, we supply the Emerald Artist reeds for oboe and bassoon. Emerald Reeds are available from many reputable distributors.

www.emeraldreed.com



Forestone Reeds

Tokyo-based Forestone Reeds bases their company on a decades-long research and development mission to develop high quality reeds made of hybrid cane/synthetic materials. The company has been on the market for about two years now, finding distribution around the world (it works through SLM in the US).

The company offers a variety of hybrid reeds for saxophones (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Baritone) and clarinets (French and German). The company's

latest products include the Unfiled Alto, the Unfiled Tenor, and B♭ Clarinet Premium Cut. The unfiled cut is designed for artists looking for a typical jazz sound



out of the '50s and '60s, with a strong attack and punch and a balanced core. The Clari-



net Premium Cut Is built to offer more resistance than the standard Forestone

model and designed for professional use. Both products leave the back part of the reed rough in a process they call "G-Tuned."

www.forestone-japan.com



Maccaferri Reeds

French American Reeds, in business since 1939, is behind the complete line of "Maccaferri" clarinet and saxophone reeds. The company's "My Masterpiece" and "Populaire" reeds are a legacy left by musician and designer Mario Maccaferri, a highly sought-after Luthier of the '30s. He conceived and designed his reeds after leaving Selmer in the 1930s. He brought his "French-American" reed business from France to the USA and began a tradition of producing the highest quality reed using his exclusive design and production techniques, which continues today under the direction of his daughter, Eliane Maccaferri Reese.

The company has been a reed-producing mainstay dating from the Big Band Era of the '40s to the present, manufactured in the US from imported superior quality cane and used by professional performers in the classical and jazz fields as well as students. The company says it's looking forward to the introduction a new reed profile later this year, designed especially for the professional or more advanced student.

Private label work with individualized packaging is a specialty with French-American Reeds – the company works closely with customers who prefer their own brand.

www.frenchamericanreeds.com



BARI

It was 1952 when BARI founder Wolfe Taninbaum developed his first synthetic reed, one of the earliest to gain acceptance from some of the world's top musicians. Today, BARI is the manufacturer of the BARI "Original" and BARI "Star" synthetic reeds, and it maintains

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a shop with the flexibility to customize BARI mouthpieces along with specializing in private-label programs in plastic, hard rubber, and metal. The production line of Bari Woodwind mouthpieces include ebonite mouthpieces, hard rubber mouthpieces, synthetic mouthpieces, a metal mouthpiece for saxophone clarinet, bass clarinet, soprano, alto sax, tenor saxophone and baritone.



Current products include the Esprit™ brand, designed as a free-blowing and easily playable plastic mouthpiece that is value-priced for students. The BARI rubber mouthpiece line is built to provide a highly responsive, rich, warm tone for jazz and concert use. The Baroque line of ebonite mouthpieces is for the discriminating classical player.

Popular metal mouthpiece brands include BARI Gold Standard™, WT IITM, WT IIITM, and Hawk IITM. Today's WT IITM and WT IIITM mouthpieces are said to be improved copies of the original. They were de-

signed to produce a dark, husky resonance that was coveted by saxophonists. The Hybrid line, introduced four years ago, is part metal and part hard rubber. The fusion of the two materials makes for the unique performance and sound, with the comfort and feel of hard rubber combined with the weight of the metal, resulting in an increased versatility.

New this year are Hybrid Stainless mouthpieces, designed for a warmer, darker sound. BARI is also introducing a brand new mouthpiece called the Cyclone, considered to be the loudest mouthpiece on the market. The Cyclone is a metal mouthpiece with three patents on its design, including a double ligature.

www.bariwoodwind.com

Lomax Classic

Lomax Classic has been handcrafting world class woodwind mouthpieces since 1997. Lomax Classic mouthpieces are used in many of the world's finest orchestras and bands, including the London Symphony, BBC Orchestra, US Navy Band, and many others. The company also offers fine student mouthpieces



which feature a hand finished facing like their professional models. These student mouthpieces – the Prelude series – are available for B♭ clarinet, bass clarinet, alto sax, and tenor sax, and will compare very favorably with more expensive, mass produced professional mouthpieces.

www.lomaxclassic.com

BG Franck Bichon

The Lyon, France-based BG Franck Bichon woodwind company manufactures a full line of accessories, including over 200 ligatures, mouthpieces, straps, swabs, stands and more, operating under a vision to “constantly innovate woodwind accessories for functionality and design.” BG opened the USA branch of the company in November 2011 to manage marketing, customer service, and artist relations, through Jessica Watts. With that office, based in Dallas, BG has more

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focus on the US market and the needs of customers more directly.

This year, BG launched the new Silver Duo ligature, which fits both B♭ clarinet and alto saxophone mouthpieces. The Duo's minimum-contact design was created to allow the player to express a



freer, bigger, and more expressive sound than other ligatures. The one screw, solid-holding design gives the musician confidence that their performance will not be compromised.

BG also launched the brand new Tenor Sax Mouthpiece in one facing this year. Based on the Zinner blank, all mouthpieces are finished by Zinner in Germany and pre-tested in France for the highest consistency and quality control. The current BG range of mouthpieces includes two facings for B♭ clarinet and two facings for Alto. All acoustic products are designed by Serge Bichon (Franck Bichon's father), who was the sax teacher of several world-renowned saxophonists, including Claude Delangle and

the Habanera Quartet. More models are on the way.

www.bgfranckbichon.com

JodyJazz

Initially a collaboration between NYC musician and jazz education Jody Espina and legendary saxophonist/mouthpiece maker Santy Runyon, JodyJazz mouthpieces have been in operation since 1999. They've created a number of popular saxophone and clarinet mouthpieces, including the JodyJazz Classic, which includes a removable baffle with a secondary reed that vibrates and disturbs the sound waves inside the mouthpiece



to create harmonics and more projection. Other models include the Norteño (designed specifically for Latin styles like Rockero, Banda, Mariachi, Cumbia, and more), DV (24kt gold sax mouthpieces), Classic Clarinet (made from JodyJazz's proprietary polycarbonate alloy and syn-

thetic rubber), and a variety of accessories and ligatures.

This summer, JodyJazz purchased the building that they've used as a headquarters and purchased a new CNC machine to help meet current demand and move aggressively toward new models on the drawing board. The company has also developed a successful publishing operations featuring play-along CDs with many contemporary greats, including Donald Harrison.

www.jodyjazz.com

Clark W. Fobes

California woodwind specialist Clark W. Fobes not only offers a full line of fine woodwind mouthpieces and barrels, he is an active performer in Bay Area orchestras and can be heard on numerous film soundtracks. Fobes launched his own brand of mouthpieces in 1990 and introduced the "Debut" line of student mouthpieces in 1993.

"They are very affordable for students and play extremely well," he says. "I believe that many stores and parents don't want to spend \$100 on hard rubber mouthpieces for beginning students and

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my Debut mouthpiece which has been successful for almost 20 years is well positioned to fill that need."

Last year, Clark W Fobes became the exclusive North American distributor of Pilgerstorfer clarinet reeds. These reeds are made with premium French cane



from the Var. Alexander Pilgerstorfer of Austria gained the rights to manufacture reeds under the old Morre name and is making reeds in that style.

The company has plans for a new synthetic barrel dubbed the "HDP" (High Density Polymer), built as an exact duplicate of Fobes's popular wood barrel, with an expected list price of \$80 and an unveiling at TMEA in San Antonio (mid-February 2013). These fine barrels can be played by students and professionals. In the saxophone department, the Fobes is working on both an alto sax mouthpiece and a tenor mouthpiece built similarly to the old Gregory "Hollywood" 18M mouthpieces.

www.clarkwfobes.com

Theo Wanne

The Theo Wanne woodwind company continues to expand on its scope of woodwind mouthpiece and instruments in categories including baritone, tenor, alto and soprano saxophone, as well as clarinet and flute. Mouthpieces include a full range of bright-to-dark mouthpieces, including their lines of Durga, Kali, Amma, Gaia, and Ambika mouthpieces.

The company recently released its first instrument – the MANTRA tenor saxophone. It includes over 30 innovations and features (and was rated a Top 50 product at NAMM 2012 by *MMR*). The saxophone includes a revolutionary new neck design with an isolated brace

and cartridge ball bearing octave key and redesigned neck tube shape. The MANTRA is designed for a full bodied sound and incredible ease of play across the full range of the saxophone.

The company recently developed its first medium chamber mouthpiece, the MANTRA mouthpiece. It was uniquely designed for its new MANTRA saxophone in-line with its full bodied, huge projecting sound.

All mouthpieces and critical parts for Theo Wanne instruments are designed and manufactured in Bellingham,

Washington. Their products are manufactured using the same ISO 9000 stringent standards required for aerospace and medical components. The company works closely with many of the world's top musicians such as Gerald Albright, Nelson Rangell, Tim Price, Mindi Abair and many others.

www.theowanne.com

Rovner

Historically, Rovner Products has produced a number of top notch mouthpieces. For the past several years, founder



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Phil Rovner has been focusing primarily on ligatures. The original Rovner Dark, introduced in the 1970s, remains one of the best-selling ligatures worldwide. But Rovner recently developed several Next Generation™ ligatures for cost-effective manufacturing, passing that savings along to his customers. Despite their relatively modest price tags, these new, patented models take Rovner's basic design concepts and broaden their scope.



Many of Rovner's different ligatures are suitable for specific styles. The Star Series, with its exceptional resonance, works well for the acoustic jazz player and for the developing student with an immature embouchure.

Jazz players and marching band players are drawn to the increased facility, presence, and projection of the Legacy. The Platinum is Rovner's first all-metal ligature, offering a pure, dark tone, enhanced response and evenness of scale, and works well with synthetic reeds. The

Versa-X is the most recent addition to the line of Next Generation ligatures. It includes repositionable flaps and newly-designed high-grade metal alloy cradle. This ligature received an *SBO* magazine "Best Tools for Schools" honor at the 2012 NAMM.

There are currently eight Rovner ligatures models, offering anywhere from 11 to 24 sizes per model. Rovner Products also provides a full line of accessories

www.rovnerproducts.com

J.J. Babbitt Co.

The J.J. Babbitt Company, Inc. produces several hundred thousand clarinet and saxophone mouthpieces per year. Established in 1919 by Jesse James Babbitt, the company caters to everyone from beginners to seasoned professionals through an association of distributors and manufacturers of OEM mouthpieces. They make mouthpieces from plastic and hard rubber that is molded and vulcanized in-house. The company also works with various metals including brass, stainless steel, and 24K gold plating.

J.J. Babbitt's newest line of products is the Otto Link Vintage mouthpiece for tenor saxophone, introduced a few years ago to celebrate the company's 90th anniversary. The mouthpieces were designed to recapture the retro sound of the original Otto Link mouthpieces, which had seen their design shifted little by little over the decades in the standard




product lines. The Vintage mouthpiece is available with the same standard tip openings as current Otto Link models and comes in a choice of metals with 24-karat gold plating or hard rubber.


www.jjbabbitt.com

Conn-Selmer

The esteemed Conn-Selmer brand continues to enjoy popularity with its Selmer C* mouthpiece, but the Elkhart, Indiana-based manufacturer and distributor (and subsidiary of Steinway Musical In-



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struments) operates a vast offering of products and brands. With names like Selmer Paris, Eugene Rousseau, Vandoren, Ted Johnson, and many more, Conn-Selmer offers a full range of mouthpieces in any type, size, and price point.



As the exclusive North American distributor of Gonzalez, the company has decided to take a different approach to building demand for an alternative brand of reeds and recently declared that Gonzalez is not to be sold by



dealers through the Internet. This move was designed to give local dealers a line of quality reeds that are free from downward price pressure, allowing them build demand in their local markets ensuring strong gross profits. The company tested this model a few years ago with the introduction of Primo, also made by Gonzalez as an economical beginner reed, and they report that sales have been very strong as dealers continue to develop their markets around this product.

www.conn-selmer.com

American Way Marketing / FAXX

American Way Marketing offers a wide variety of high quality, professional level woodwind mouthpieces, including their own FAXX brand. FAXX mouthpieces



are crafted by top manufacturers in both the USA and Europe, strategically selected based upon demand from retailers and end user requests. New models from FAXX include the Giardinelli-style for French horn, trumpet 1.25C & 7B, flugelhorn 3C & 5C, trombone/euphonium 51D, B \flat clarinet FX45 & 5MHL, and the square chamber C* for alto and tenor saxes.

The latest mouthpieces introduced by American Way are the Silver Line

mouthpieces for saxophones from Peter Ponzol, made of a custom Delrin material. Other brands distributed by AWM



include Babbitt, BARI, B & S, Claude Lakey, Denis Wick, Guy Hawkins, Meyer, Otto Link, Peter Ponzol, Portnoy, Ted Johnson, Vandoren, Warburton, Wolfe Tayne and Yamaha.

www.americanwaymktg.com

Beechler/ARB Mouthpieces

Remle Musical Products, Inc. makes the Beechler and ARB Saxophone and Clarinet Mouthpieces. Those based on Elmer Beechler have been in production for over 60 years, while the ARB mouthpieces were designed by Arnold Brilhart and have been in production since 1978.



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Remle offers a wide selection of materials, facings, and bore sizes. Materials include stainless steel, hard rubber, gold plate, and composites. Diamond mouthpieces come in three bore sizes and, while facing is available from two to 10. Stainless steel mouthpieces come in one bore size and a facing of three to 10. Larger tip openings are available on request.

All Beechler/ARB mouthpieces are finished with a hand facing and are all play tested before leaving the shop. Custom made mouthpieces are also available.

www.beechler.com

Backun

Designed in collaboration between Morrie Backun and Ricardo Morales, Backun Musical Services' MoBa mouthpiece line has become one of the most popular mouthpiece lines within the professional and serious-amateur clarinet communities. It is currently being played in a most of the major orchestras around the world, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Symphony, Nagoya Symphony, Tokyo Metropolitan, and Orchestra della

Svizzera Italiana, as well as by jazz and commercial players such as Eddie Daniels.

Newly expanded, the line now includes 13 B \flat , two E \flat , and two Bass Clarinet mouthpieces, with the most recent editions including Artist models for Eddie Daniels (one model for classical and one model for jazz) and London Silas Shavers.



BMS says they're putting the final touches on an in-house mouthpiece project that has been years in the making, designed to enter the "affordable" mouthpiece market. Made from a solid billet of a special material and machined on the company's 9-axis CNC, the mouthpiece will combine legendary Backun playability with an attractive price.

www.backunmusical.com

SaxZ

SaxZ Inc., a Japanese saxophone mouthpiece manufacturer, was founded by Mitsu Watanabe in 1999. In 2004, the company was incorporated as its business expanded. Currently headed by Toshi Kamakura, the company continues to develop and manufacture high-quality sax mouthpieces and accessories, sell saxophones, and repair mouthpieces and instruments.

The company recently introduced its original sterling silver model, using top quality materials. In 2008, under contract with Sony Music Artists, they produced the signature mouthpiece for Takeshi Ito, the sax player for T-Square, a Japanese jazz fusion band. In 2011, SaxZ signed a contract with



legendary alto player David Sanborn and released the David

Sanborn Signature Model mouthpieces in three different versions: sterling silver, metal, and HR type. Working closely with David Sandborn, Mitsu Watanabe, the founder and now director of SaxZ, spent two and half years developing this model. Made of 100



percent Sterling Silver, the sound of this mouthpiece is designed to be pure and rich, harmoniously blending gorgeous tone and dynamic blast.

Other models from SaxZ include Empire Sterling Silver, Empire Metal, NYC New York Series HR type, and Vintage1950 Series HR Type mouthpieces (there are over ten different types in all). They have also produced saxophones, ligatures, caps and saxophone mutes. All products are handcrafted in Japan with materials 100 percent procured in Japan.

www.saxz.net

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Drake

Drake makes their mouthpieces by hand in Plainfield, N.J. and equips each with a lifetime warranty, offering a number of popular lines for saxophone and clarinet (including clarinet barrels). Favorites include the Ceramic Chamber line, which



is constructed with an actual ceramic interior that the company says works to give players a better sense of control and vibrato, as well as enabling a brassier tone from the horns. They also offer ligatures such as

the Vintage Resin Double Rail and the Quad Point Ceramic Resonance Plate, the latter of which includes a ceramic plate touching the reed in four places.

Recently, Drake has introduced several models in its Master Series line of mouthpieces, designed in collaboration with renowned artists. Products in this line included the David Liebman soprano mouthpiece, the Jerry Bergonzi tenor mouthpiece, and the Peter Christlieb tenor mouthpiece. The Liebman model is designed for the widest range of expression possible, while the Bergonzi model is based on the master's personal EB from the '60s. The classic "crescent" shaped baffle transitions to a recalibrated floor contour and ultimately a round large chamber. Additional banding on the shank helps to focus the core vibrational frequencies and increase projection. The Christlieb model is based on the "Bullet Chamber" design utilized by Christlieb for over 50 years. Its baffle is contoured to create an "aliveness" in the sound that is even through all registers, while also including additional long banding on the shank.

www.drakemouthpieces.com

Bobby Dukoff

The esteemed Bobby Dukoff mouthpiece company was started in the 1940s, when the late Bobby Dukoff began repairing broken mouthpieces and, subsequently, started designing his own. He created


mouthpieces in the '40s that changed the conventional tone of the mouthpiece chamber and performed experiments with hard rubber, plexiglass, and metals. Early creations are collector pieces. Dukoff also found work as an audio engineer at RCA, but his legacy lives on through Bobby Dukoff Mouthpieces.



www.dukoff.com

Current models are available for tenor, soprano, alto, and baritone saxophone, including the D chamber (designed for a cutting sound made for solo and lead playing) and the M chamber (designed for a pronounced but wider projection, making it ideal for blending).

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