

## Getting Down to Brass Tributes

RS BERKELEY AND GREG BLACK MOUTHPIECES PAY HOMAGE TO TRUMPET LEGENDS WITH A NEW LINE OF REPLICA MOUTHPIECES

by Chris Walker

Let's face it: You can try to emulate your idols, but you can't buy a sound. Get that vintage Committee if you want, but it's unlikely anyone will mistake you for Miles. You're still just you. That said, there's no harm in trying.

The folks at RS Berkeley and Greg Black Mouthpieces recently introduced the Legends Series brass line, which follows Berkeley and Drake Mouthpieces' Legends sax mouthpiece line and gives us another tool for hero worship: replicas of 'pieces used by some of the biggest names in jazz trumpet history. Made by Black in the United States, they are, as the literature puts it, "crafted to honor the dedication, history and soulful styles of the world's most respected brass musicians and their music."

While your favorite player might be missing, it's hard to argue with the choices thus far. Initial models include tributes to Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Woody Shaw and Clark Terry. All are well machined and finished, and faithfully duplicate the originals, which were obtained from family, museums or wherever the trail led. They bear only the artist's name, with no manufacturer's logos. You won't get any references to the original brands from Berkeley, likely due to legal issues, but it's easy to make an educated guess, since the replication is so thorough.

While being perfectly good trumpet mouthpieces in their own right, they are something more. They provide a unique look at what some of the masters played; and, who knows, maybe using one on "West End Blues" or "Katrina Ballerina" will get you a little closer to the source. For the diehard fan, these accurate silver-plated reproductions are a dream come true. To buy an original example of one of these classic models wouldn't be cheap—if, in fact, you are lucky enough to find one. Most haven't been available for years, and there weren't that many in the first place.

The Giardinelli-like Armstrong model has a .685-inch inner diameter; a flat, medium-wide rim; and a fairly shallow double cup with a 28 throat. This is a *lot* bigger than my usual .630-inch shallow lead piece, so it felt a little foreign. In spite of this, it was enjoyable to play and I got a nice bright, fat sound. And while a wide rim like this might sacrifice some flexibility or attack, I found it extremely comfortable.

The Dizzy model has a .590-inch diameter; a round, medium-wide rim; and a shallow bowl-shaped cup with a 24 throat. It reminds me of my old Al Cass, but the Berkeley/Black replica is vastly superior in finish quality. This is the closest to my usual set-up and worked the best for me. Producing a bright, well-centered sound, this would be a reasonable choice for a lead player who is looking for a small, shallow mouthpiece.

The Woody Shaw model is .620-inch with a semi-flat, medium-wide rim and a medium-deep cup with a 26 throat. A fairly deep cup for the relatively small diameter, it's an interesting, if a bit



▲ Legends Series models for Woody Shaw, Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie (top to bottom)

unusual combination. Many people playing a diameter this small are looking for a screaming lead sound, but this model can also produce warm tones. According to the official Woody Shaw website, it's based on an unknown maker's mouthpiece Shaw played throughout the '70s and '80s.

I wasn't provided with a Clark Terry model to evaluate, but specifications from Berkeley tell me to expect a .628-inch diameter, semi-flat rim and V-shaped medium-deep cup.

With a list price of \$298 and MAP of \$249, these mouthpieces are fairly expensive, and will likely appeal to the dedicated fan or the very curious. But a mouthpiece with a side of history is worth somewhat more.

I'm told there are more models on the way. And although Berkeley doesn't claim that you can buy a sound with any of their Legends mouthpieces, if they offer a model that comes packaged with Maynard Ferguson's 1957 timbre, I'll take two. **JT**