

# book

## BOOK REVIEWS

### FROM THE INSIDE OUT: AN IN-DEPTH RESOURCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SAXOPHONE SOUND

Dr Mark Watkins  
Outskirts Press

Usually when I'm approached to write a book or sheet music review, I'm provided with a copy of the material for review purposes. However, in the case of *From the Inside Out*, not only did I already have a copy, but it was also a signed copy, which I had picked up after attending a lecture by the author at the 2018 World Saxophone Congress in Zagreb. As you can tell by the fact I purchased the book, the lecture by Dr Mark Watkins and his colleague Dr C. Raymond Smith piqued my interest, and I was intrigued to find out more about their research.

*From the Inside Out* does exactly what it says on the cover, providing an in-depth study of what is happening when we play the saxophone, including inside our bodies. Much of the analysis is carried out by studying professional players and using various imaging techniques to observe them as they play. The book suggests that much of what we are taught as saxophonists is based on perceived sensations, which may not actually relate to what we are doing physically. For example, when we have learnt to 'increase the airspeed' or 'raise the tongue' to aid high notes, is this what we are really doing, or have we simply learnt to associate these instructions with the required actions to produce these notes?

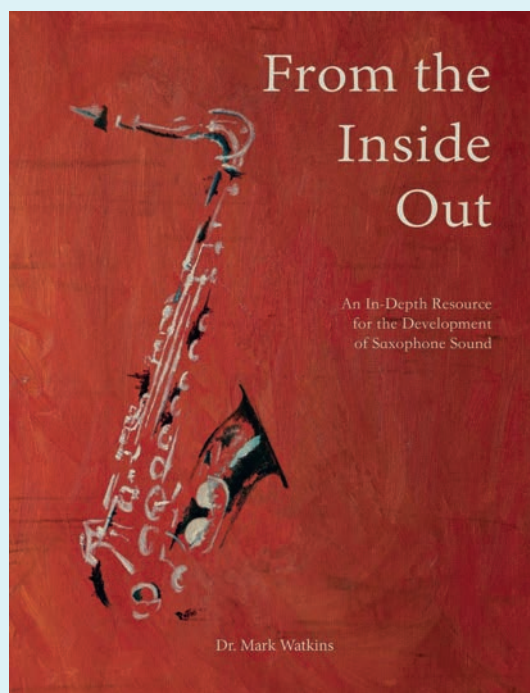
*From the Inside Out* is an incredible resource for saxophone players, and blows open many long-held beliefs by showing that much of what we are taught is simply not what is happening anatomically when we play. However, the book is not for the faint-hearted, at times reading more like a textbook or PhD thesis than a book aimed at casual readers. (Some may find it useful to begin with the conclusion at the end of the book before deciding which chapters they wish to study in more depth.) As with every study, there are limitations to the scientific method. The studies primarily look at American players, often from the same university departments, and I feel it would have been beneficial to analyse a larger number of players from more varied backgrounds for some of the studies. However, that is not to take anything away from the vast amount of research that has gone into this book and the fascinating images and data that are presented within.

The book progresses through core elements of playing, discussing the role of the vocal tract across different registers

This is a fascinating book which goes into incredible levels of detail on how our bodies interact with the saxophone while playing

before progressing onto elements such as articulation, a comparison of classical and jazz playing, extended techniques, vibrato, overtones and the altissimo register. The chapters are reasonably independent, so it is possible for players to dip in and out of the sections that are of most interest.

Overall, this is a fascinating book which goes into incredible levels of detail on how our bodies interact with the saxophone while playing. It is backed up by a thorough scientific investigation, which might make uncomfortable reading for some players and teachers who have preconceptions about how our bodies interact with the instrument. While the scientific nature might make it a challenging read for some, and it is certainly not a book you would sit down and read cover to cover, I would class it as essential reading for anyone that considers themselves a saxophone nerd or has an interest in how their body interacts with the instrument.



Alastair Penman