

Sadowsky Electric Nylon Guitar (as reviewed in *Guitar Player Magazine*, July 1990)

New York City guitar maker Roger Sadowsky's solidbody nylon-string electric is a marvelous mongrel, an outrageous instrument that strikes many clever compromises between classical and electric design. And it delivers much, much more than a feedback-free imitation of a nylon-string acoustic.

Does it sound like a regular classical guitar? Not *exactly*, but that's the beauty of the instrument. While the basic tone is quite realistic—you could probably fool a casual listener in another room if you had the proper amp setting—the

guitar responds more like an electric, although it's difficult to explain exactly how. The pickup seems to exaggerate subtle timbral and dynamic variations, and tiny alterations in right-hand pressure or placement induce massive tone changes. Until you get used to it, the guitar is almost *too* responsive.

The guitar lends itself to plenty of non-classical techniques. Clean Satriani-style two-handed tapping works nicely, as do bass-style thumb pops, bluesy bends, and all sorts of smears and scrapes. Then, of course, there are all the signal-processing possibilities—it was a

blast running the output through various multi-effector settings. And the guitar records like a dream; we had great results miking amps, going direct, and—best of all—combining the two.

Nylon-stringers in search of a hassle-free, groovy-looking stage instrument will be delighted with this beauty. But the real joy of the guitar is the technical and stylistic cross-fertilization that it is likely to promote. In the right hands, this instrument could make some serious waves. An inspired and inspiring piece of work, it's available only from Sadowsky Guitars Ltd.

Sadowsky Custom Guitar (as reviewed in *Guitar Shop Magazine*)

Roger Sadowsky is one of the world's best-known luthiers, catering to such rock luminaries as Keith Richards, Mike Stern, Will Lee, Bruce Springsteen, and John Scofield, among others. The Sadowsky guitar I sampled is a custom Strat with a bolt-on neck. It's body is made of lightweight alder with a fine quilted-maple top, which also has a contour where a player's arm can rest for playing comfort. With its beautiful cherry sunburst finish, the guitar is visually quite appealing, but the real proof is in the sound and playability.

The neck on this Strat-style guitar is made of maple with a tightly grained pau ferro fingerboard and a very light finish for a super smooth, almost barewood feel. Other attributes include a very flat radius, 22 jumbo frets and standard Teflon nut. The width feels consistently narrow across the fingerboard, from the nut all the way down to the 22nd fret. From front to back, the neck is thin and round, somewhat like a '60s Fender Strat. The frets' edges are finished to impeccable perfection—in fact, they are so smooth that you absolutely cannot feel any burrs anywhere. (If only every guitar's frets could feel this good!) Actually, fretwork is a specialty of Sadowsky's shop and this guitar is a prime example. Like Fender Strats, the headstock has very little pitch, and it also uses custom-made Sperzel Trimlok

tuning gears, which have shorter posts for the third, fourth, fifth and sixth strings for greater down-bearing pressure behind the nut. Finally, one stringtree guides the first and second strings. No squeaks or sticking here and the guitar holds its tuning with exceptional accuracy.

The bridge is a vintage-style Gotoh tremolo with custom-made cast steel saddles for better sustain and more accurate intonation, while the pickups are Sadowsky's own design and specially wound by DiMarzio. This guitar is loaded with two humbuckers and a single-coil in the middle position a standard Strat-style configuration (though different bridges and pickups are available upon request). There is a five-way pickup selector and Sadowsky's custom electronics, which feature an active midrange boost and gain control that operates on a 9-volt battery. A three-way mini toggle switch controls the preamp modes: midrange boost, midrange boost plus gain, or bypass. The preamp's gain control can further be adjusted by the trim pot inside the control cavity for a more or less aggressive boost. Other controls include volume, midrange boost, and tone. The tone pot has a push/pull feature to select either a .05 μf (microfarad) or .02 μf capacitor for more versatility of the tone control when using different pickup combinations.

The neck pickup is warm and fat-sounding with good clarity and no muddiness, even with the midrange boost and gain on full. The bridge pickup is louder and hotter than the neck or middle pickup and has a more aggressive fat, punchy sound for great lead tone with a slight edge to really cut through. In the in-between positions on the selector (second and fourth), the centered single-coil can combine with a splitcoil of either humbucker. The volume in these positions is slightly lower in order to produce accurate Strat sounds. There are really endless varieties of sounds that you can achieve when messing around with the different combinations of pickups and electronics. The push/pull capacitor selector is a great idea, since the .05 μf capacitor lends itself well to the neck pickup, while the .02 μf capacitor works great for lead tone on the bridge pickup. As for the preamp, this one is surprisingly quiet in comparison to some of the others I've tried in the past, including the one in my own guitar. *Rats*.

To sum it all up, this is definitely a working-man's axe designed for versatile players who need one guitar that can produce virtually any tone on demand. I have no doubt that many studio players will appreciate the quality and useful features of this Sadowsky. It ain't cheap, but if you wear many musical hats for live or studio work, give Roger a call and see for yourself why I'm so impressed.