

SADOWSKY VINTAGE 5

(as reviewed in *Bass Player Magazine*, January 1997)



THE SADOWSKY SOUND: super fat, round, and punchy. The Vintage 5 has all of these qualities, which makes it the ideal axe for anyone weaned on the classic tones of collectable basses. It's also expertly built and features the excellent Sadowsky preamp.

The instrument's classic tone is provided by two Sadowsky J-style passive single-coil pickups with exposed pole-pieces. Since the pickups are single coils, they do hum when soloed. (Although custom, "hum-free" Sadowsky pickups are available as an option.) They're connected to master volume, blend, and bass and treble-boost controls. (When the EQ controls are turned all the way down, they're actually flat.) This bass had one of the best control cavities of any we saw. The pots and preamp sit inside a fully shielded cavity that's covered in conductive paint to reject 60-cycle hum; a "star" grounding system prevents RF (radio-frequency) interference. This grounding uses a single point for all of the grounds: a wire from each individual ground on the pots and pickups is soldered to a steel terminal. Then, a wire with a 100-pf capacitor at the end (to bleed out any outside noise) is run from the terminal to the wall of the shielded cavity. Excellent job. The

9-volt battery for the preamp sits in a clip inside the cavity, but the electronics can be run in passive mode by pulling up on the bass control.

The Sadowsky is made of lightweight swamp ash with an AAA-grade quilted-maple top. The tester's two-tone vintage sunburst finish was super clean. The flatsawn maple neck features a 21-fret maple fingerboard; the frets had nicely formed ends (although you could see some file marks), rounded crowns, and a tight fit to the fingerboard. The Vintage 5's broad neck fit into the hands of those raised in the Fender camp, but it was too hefty for players used to necks with smaller profiles. (Roger Sadowsky says the necks on all Vintage 5's are now .030" thinner than our review bass.) Tonewise, some found the tube-like lows of the bass a bit too immense—even on the B—while others thought this was very satisfying. (Sadowsky also offers a more modern-sounding 24-fret 5-string with EMG soapbars.)

The Vintage 5's forte? Dishing out big-time support. **Comments:** "The best B for rock." "Big ol' booty." "The EQ is very tuned in to the response of the bass."