

Gear

ROUNDUP



Sadowsky HSH S-Style

ROGER SADOWSKY OFFERS A BROAD menu of options for the guitars and basses that he and his team build in Long Island City, New York, and the HSH S-Style on review here features an upgrades list that includes a mahogany body (\$50), flame-maple top (\$300), scraped “binding” (\$50), ebony fretboard (\$100), and black hardware (\$50)—the total of which elevates the base price of \$3,775 to \$4,325. As you’d expect for this kind of money, the HSH S-Style is a finely crafted instrument with every element attended to for optimum tone, playability, and appearance. The natural maple neck feels sleek and inviting, and the expertly finished frets, low action, and solid intonation add to a feeling of unhindered playability. Trem users will also appreciate the smoothness and excellent return-to-pitch response of the Gotoh 510 bridge. The added stability of locking Sperzel tuners makes it an ideal setup for those who don’t want the drama of a double locking system.

The HSH S-Style’s electronics package is an ambitious affair that features a pair of custom-wound DiMarzio humbuckers flanking a single-coil in the center slot. A 5-way switch provides the usual combinations, but also works in tandem with a 2-position mini toggle that either activates a neck-plus-bridge combination when the 5-way is in either the neck or bridge position, or activates all three pickups when the 5-way is in the middle position.

But wait, there’s more: A second 3-way mini toggle lets you choose total bypass (fully passive), preamp on (which also brings in the Middle control to provide a variable boost at 400Hz), and gain boost (adjustable via a trimpot on the circuit board). Needless to say, there’s a mind-boggling number of ways to change up the sounds of this guitar—from traditional passive humbucker and single-coil tones, to more powerful “active” sounds that can easily push an amp into overdrive while giving more precise control of the midrange frequencies. The preamp (which is also very quiet) is powered by a 9-volt battery that rests in a separate rout inside the neatly wired control cavity. Noteworthy is that the cover plate for the electronics is secured with machine screws that won’t strip out like wood screws can. The trem bay cover uses wood screws, however.

Whether you’re going for sparkling clean tones with clucky in-between tonalities (very crisp and bell-like with the Tone knob pulled up to put the humbuckers in single-coil mode) or heavily distorted shred tones—or any point in-between—the HSH S-Style makes it easy to get there. The guitar’s chameleon-like sonic abilities might create some option anxiety, but if having tons of sounds at your fingertips is important, this 6-string equivalent of the Swiss Army Knife with its top-tier build and playability is a winner. —ART THOMPSON

SPECIFICATIONS

CONTACT	Sadowsky Guitars; sadowskyguitars.com
MODEL	HSH S-Style
PRICE	\$3,775 base, \$4,325 as tested
NUT WIDTH	1.69"
NECK	Flat sawn Eastern maple, bolt-on
FRETBOARD	Ebony, 25.5" scale
FRETS	22 medium-jumbo
TUNERS	Sperzel locking w/ custom post heights
BODY	Chambered Khaya mahogany w/optional flame-maple top
BRIDGE	Gotoh 510
PICKUPS	Two DiMarzio custom wound humbuckers, one DiMarzio single-coil
CONTROLS	Volume, Tone (pulls to split the humbuckers), 5-way selector, 3-way mini toggle (preamp off, on, gain boost), Middle control (functions only when preamp is active), 2-way mini toggle (adds neck + bridge pickups or all three pickups simultaneously)
FACTORY STRINGS	Sadowsky Alloy 52 .010-.046
WEIGHT	6.5 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Superb playability. Excellent workmanship. Tons of sounds.
CONCERNS	None.