



# SADOWSKY

## Metro M524

A BLONDE BEAUTY FROM THE  
LAND OF THE RISING SUN.  
MIKE BROOKS INVESTIGATES

The Gallery

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Following in the wake of many US manufacturers in opting for Far East production in order to offer quality product at a more pocket-friendly price, Roger Sadowsky's Metro bass range has been popular for almost a decade. The M524 is a solid-body instrument, rather than the chambered variant available from the NYC workshop: how much bang do you get for your buck when the price tag is a tad under £2,250?

### BUILD QUALITY

There's no disputing the high-quality craftsmanship here. The Metro's comfortable proportions benefit its neatly sculpted body, with subtle chamfering to the top body bout and deep contouring to the rear, while the lower cutaway offers unrestrained access to the upper frets of the 24-fret neck. The swamp ash body timber is very nicely figured, with the natural honey blonde tones shown off by the gloss finish. The graphite-reinforced neck feels extremely sturdy, with the four-bolt neck attachment doing its job admirably and the tight neck pocket showing no sign of any gaps.

The bleach blonde maple neck benefits from a vintage thin matte nitro finish, a point which luthier Roger Sadowsky believes improves his instruments, although he is quick to point out that if the neck finish begins to wear, this is not a defect, it is intentional. Black position markers have been used on the front and side of the neck; the rounded fret ends and gently rolled fingerboard provide a comfortable neck with no sharp fret ends in evidence; and although the fingerboard is broad (48mm at the nut with 19mm string spacing), this is compensated for by the sleek neck profile, although the depth of the neck offers a substantial feel. Being a five-string instrument, naturally there is some moderate neck dive, but this is remedied as soon as it's placed on a strap.

Chrome headstock hardware, including Hipshot elephant ear machine





heads, and a vintage bridge are matched with a black control set (volume, pickup pan, stacked bass and treble controls and a push/pull vintage tone control [VTC] operable in both active and passive modes) and a pair of Sadowsky hum-cancelling soapbar pickups. Taking a quick peek inside, the control cavity is well shielded, neat and tidy, with the cabling tied back.

## PLAYABILITY AND SOUNDS

Acoustically, this bass is lively, bright and vibrant from the off and it resonates very clearly, which is no bad thing. As a Sadowsky, you expect a certain level of comfort, and this bass seriously delivers in that particular department. It's reassuringly easy to get to grips with and difficult to put down, in no small part due to the one-piece maple neck that is a real joy to play.

Surprisingly, once plugged in, the raucous, throaty delivery I was expecting was tempered somewhat. If anything this bass comes across as a rather refined, traditional vintage-sounding instrument, rather than the all-guns-blazing, hyper-modern sound which I had envisaged. With the bass EQ set flat (EQ controls at zero, and the

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VTC set fully clockwise), the vanilla tone is perfectly usable in its own right, but adding some EQ boost reinforces the overall delivery. At no point does the treble control offer overpoweringly sparkly, glassy highs: this may or may not appeal to different players.

Although the bass and treble boost offer significant headroom to play with, the VTC is the icing on the cake in terms of tone shaping – although again, it isn't offering tonal extremes. In passive mode, it's a godsend as it offers some much needed light and shade to your sound. It's a sensitive yet subtle control that requires some experimentation on the part of the player if its best use with regard to each pickup is to be found.

The more I played this bass, the greater its appeal became apparent. The fact that the circuit augments rather than saps the traditional tones is a plus: perhaps more circuit manufacturers should take heed. No matter what style of playing I threw at it, the bass performed very impressively and I can certainly see it appealing to those looking for powerful, vintage tones.

## CONCLUSION

The M524 sounds impressive, its looks are fashionably understated and there is much to like about this bass. It retains all the hallmarks of Roger Sadowsky's offerings so far and as a working instrument it would be a fine choice. The only 'But...' is the price: at over £2,000, you could have a bass custom-built to your specification. Maybe this bass lacks that little something which would knock you off your feet. Nevertheless, it's a fine instrument and certainly worth investigating. ■

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

- PRICE** | £2,247
- COLOUR** | Natural
- BODY** | Swamp ash
- NECK** | Maple
- FINGERBOARD** | Maple
- PICKUPS** | Two Sadowsky hum-cancelling soapbar pickups
- ELECTRONICS** | Sadowsky two-band EQ preamp with vintage tone control
- CONTROLS** | Volume, pickup pan, bass/treble boost only (stacked), vintage tone control with active/passive selector (push/pull)
- TUNERS** | Hipshot elephant ear tuners
- BRIDGE** | Vintage style
- MADE IN** | Japan
- NUT WIDTH** | 48mm
- NECK JOIN** | Bolt-on, four-bolt
- SCALE LENGTH** | 34" (864mm)
- FRETS** | 24
- WEIGHT** | 4.28kg (9lb 6oz)
- LEFT HAND MODEL AVAILABLE?** | No
- GIGBAG/CASE** | Semi-hardcase

## WHAT WE THINK

- PLUS** | Highly usable tones with a high-quality B-string delivery; comfortable and extremely playable
- MINUS** | Lacks the 'X factor' at this price
- OVERALL** | A sound performer, classy without being too flash

## BGM RATING

BUILD QUALITY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
SOUND QUALITY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
VALUE	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■