

Sadowsky Vintage 5 (as reviewed in Bass Player Magazine, Jan. 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 light-weight 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."

Sadowsky Outboard Bass Preamp (as reviewed in Bass Player Magazine, Mar./Apr. 1991)

For more than ten years, bassists from all over the world have asked New York luthier and repairman Roger Sadowsky to install his preamp in their instruments. Now, there's a new way to get that "Sadowsky sound" with the outboard version of the preamp. This compact unit meets the needs of three types of bassists: (1) those who can't come to New York to have a preamp installed; (2) those who don't want to modify a vintage instrument (the onboard version requires some routing); and (3) those who want to use the preamp with more than one bass. Whatever the case, the Sadowsky preamp virtually eliminates the signal loss that occurs in the cord—and it allows effects to be driven more efficiently.

Comments. I used the preamp between a '71 Fender Jazz Bass with passive single-coil pickups and a Peavey MegaBass head with a 4x10 Hartke cabinet, and it was a revelation! By dialing up a good amount of bass boost and a touch of treble, I was able to keep the

bite and growl available only from single-coil pickups while adding the increased output of an active bass, creating a thunderous presence that wasn't

boomy. I also used the preamp with a new Fender Jazz Bass Plus 5-string and found that boosting equal amounts of bass and treble helped to punch out the low B's and E's. In the bass's passive mode, the preamp added high- and low-end clarity; when I switched to active, there was noticeably more warmth and depth. Finally, I tried the Sadow-

sky preamp with an ESP 400 Series bass with EMG active pickups; the unit enhanced the warmth, whether I was slapping or playing fingerstyle.

The Sadowsky Outboard Preamp is a well-made, affordable, easy-to-use unit that can add much to the tone, presence, and versatility of your bass arsenal. It can help the sound of almost any instrument, especially those with single coil passive pickups, and it's a must for those "problem" axes with blurry or overly dark sound.

