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Effects

NEW + COOL GUITAR

MAGIC IN THE AIR

SADOWSKY BROADWAY SERIES
 LS-13 AND SS-13

{ BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK }

ROGER SADOWSKY STARTED OUT building flattop acoustic guitars in the early Seventies, but after setting up his own business in New York City at the end of that decade, he began to make a name for himself within the guitar and bass community as the go-to guy for instrument modification. “My clients were all the top session players, and the musicians doing club dates and other gigs,” Sadowsky says. “I spent those early years modifying their instruments to improve them as much as I could, which meant anything from really good fret jobs to installing electronic shielding for noise reduction, improved electronics, and—especially with basses—active tone circuits.”

But as the vintage guitar market began to heat up in the Eighties, Sadowsky realized that his customizations, while providing superior tone and playability, also resulted in these instruments losing some value. “At that point I felt I could better serve my clients by making my own guitars and basses from scratch,” he says. “That way I could go to sleep at night not worrying I had devalued an expensive vintage piece.”

Since then, the Sadowsky name has become synonymous with high-end, high-quality players’ instruments, particularly in the bass sphere. But Sadowsky has also built premium guitars for decades, including instruments he made for Prince





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and a celebrated cadre of affordable laminate-constructed archtops. Now, Sadowsky has introduced his new Broadway Series, which consists of two new guitars, to his production line.

The two models, the LS-13 and SS-13 (the designation denotes “long scale” and “short scale,” as well as a 13-inch body width), encapsulate all the knowledge and experience Sadowsky has gleaned from his 45 years of building, modifying, and repairing guitars and basses. For starters, both guitars boast chambered body cavities, a technique that Sadowsky has employed in all his builds for decades. “I started chambering my instruments as a way to reduce weight while also increasing resonance,” he explains. “A lot of people in the industry have now come around to what I’ve been espousing for 35 years.”

In addition to chambering, the Broadway Series models feature bodies built from a spruce core, which are then fitted with harder top and back woods. “Spruce is the number-one tonewood across the acoustic instrument spectrum, from guitars to mandolins to piano soundboards to the whole violin family,” Sa-

dowsky says. But, he explains, “it’s also a soft wood. If it were exposed it would get dinged up in no time. So we decided to construct the body from 90 percent spruce and then pair it with a top and back, which finish out at about a tenth-of-an-inch thick, of a harder wood. To make it even more deluxe, the top and the back are matching cuts from the same billet. We offer a selection of standard-grade woods, which are really nice, and then we have our master-grade stuff, which is the absolute cream of the crop.” That cream-of-the-crop wood is evidenced in the two models shown here, which boast master-grade quilt maple (LS-13) and master-grade koa (SS-13) tops and backs.

These premium woods extend to other areas of the guitars as well. Both models shown here feature Brazilian rosewood fingerboards (a range of rosewoods, including Amazon, Madagascar, and African, as well as rosewood alternatives, are also offered) atop maple (LS-13) and flame-roasted maple (SS-13) necks. Fretboard dot markers are optional, as is Sadowsky’s trademark 12th-fret “skyline” inlay, constructed from different types of shell

and shown here on the SS-13.

Pickup-wise, the SS-13, in keeping with its Gibson-like 24 3/4-inch shorter scale, offers a dual-humbucker configuration, while the LS-13, with its more Fender-ish 25 1/2-inch scale, adds a single-coil pickup in the center. “We have a true single-coil in the middle so that when the five-way selector is in positions two and four and the pickups split to single it hum-cancels and you get a good Strat-like sound,” Sadowsky says of the LS-13 configuration. “If a customer wanted to split a humbucker in the neck or bridge by itself we can add a push-pull pot on the tone control to accomplish that.” Both guitars have PAF-style humbuckers, custom-wound for Sadowsky by DiMarzio.

Both models are fitted with a volume knob, two tone knobs, and a pickup selector switch, all of which, in a nice touch, is offered in two layouts. “For my entire career, my clientele has largely been working musicians, and working musicians have specific needs,” Sadowsky says. “That’s why I do a Fender scale length and a Gibson scale length—I like to embrace those differences. With the control layout, there are players

who prefer the knobs closer to the strings in order to do things like pinkie rolls, for example, on the volume control. Then there are guitarists who find that the knobs get in the way of the selector switch, and they’d rather have the switch closer to the strings. We accommodate both.”

Additionally, both Broadway Series guitars boast Sadowsky’s custom mid-boost preamp. “My history on the preamp goes back to the late Eighties,” Sadowsky says. “I developed a circuit where the player could boost the mids and gain independently. On these guitars, there’s a three-position mini toggle where the first position is total bypass, the middle position activates a midrange boost that makes the guitar thicker, fatter, and hairier, and the back setting is an additional gain boost on top of wherever the mid

boost is set. The amount of gain is adjustable via a trim pot on the circuit board. We set it to a lower level for taking a solo, but you can max it out if you want to overdrive your amp.”

Hardware on both guitars includes top-of-the-line Gotoh vintage tuners and Gotoh bridges (available in both tremolo and hard tail), as well as custom Graph Tech TUSQ XL nuts and steel saddles. The result is an understated but elegant package where the wood, both visually and tonally, speaks for itself.

“That’s always been my stylistic approach,” Sadowsky says. “I’m not into a lot of flashy stuff that doesn’t bring value to the instrument from a playing and tonal point of view. After years of repairing and modding electric guitars, I’ve come to believe that solidbody instruments are

first and foremost acoustic instruments, and the better they sound acoustically the better they sound amplified. When I was doing mods, I was always driven to offer maximum playability without unnecessary bells and whistles. To this day, that’s what I attempt to provide in my own instruments as well.”

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LIST PRICE: \$5,900 and up
As Shown: LS-13: \$8,175 (master-grade quilt maple top and back; master-grade Brazilian rosewood fingerboard); SS-13: \$9,600 (master-grade koa top and back; master-grade Brazilian rosewood fingerboard; master-grade flame roasted maple neck; Sadowsky “Skyline” inlay at 12th fret) Sadowsky Guitars, sadowsky.com