

Jazz Axe, Plus Sadowsky Semi-Hollow

WITH HIS NEWEST creation, luthier Roger Sadowsky endows his entrant into the world of semi-hollow guitars with capabilities to cover the demands of blues, rock, and fusion. And while Sadowsky himself describes the Semi-Hollow Model simply as “a jazz guitar that can be played louder,” there’s way more under the hood.

The Sadowsky S-H is different from all its semi-hollow counterparts. Rather than re-purpose or recycle the ES-335 design, Sadowsky took the template of his Jimmy Bruno archtop as a starting point. He retained the single-cutaway shape, junction at the 15th fret and smaller 14³/₄" body but thinned it to a 1³/₄" depth. Then he deepened the cutaway to improve high-register access and added a spruce center block. The block is strategically chambered and has a two-fold result; it reduces the overall weight and imparts its own acoustical properties to the sound. Here, the S-H takes a deliberate turn to the hollow side of the equation.

The S-H has a 22-fret fingerboard of Amazon rosewood with dot inlays on a mahogany neck. The scale length is 24³/₄" with a 1¹/₁₆" nut width like a 335, Les Paul or 175, making it easy to switch from those axes. The tuneomatic-style bridge and stop tailpiece lend the appropriate traditional touch to the instrument. All metal parts are nickel-plated.

Electronics consist of two Sadowsky humbuckers (built by DiMarzio) and a control circuit with master Volume, master Tone and a three-position selector toggle switch. This configuration can at first be off-putting despite its elegance, if a player is accustomed to the more typical Gibson circuit with four controls. But it’s easy to appreciate the simplicity and functionality of Roger’s design, including the location of the switch at the lower treble bout

instead of the typical placement at the bridge or the bass side of the upper bout.

The S-H maintains its elegance with subtle appointments. Like the Bruno, it has ebony tuning buttons, multiple binding on the body (back and front), double binding on the headstock, and an ebony truss rod cover. The S-H comes from the factory without a mounted pickguard; its ebony pickguard and hardware are included though, leaving the option of attaching it. Also noteworthy and thoughtful are the stock Dunlop strap lock buttons.

The S-H is offered in six finishes; Vintage Amber (aged natural), Caramel Burst (light ice-

tea SB), Violin Burst (orange Cremona-type SB), Sienna Burst (reddish brown to orange SB), Tobacco Burst (traditional vintage dark brown to yellow SB), and Transparent Black (see-through inky black). Each shows off the grain of its flamed-maple back and top. Construction and detailing on our review sample were flawless with no issues regarding paint spray, glue joints, or the like. It was shipped with Sadowsky medium/light roundwounds (.011-.050) with a plain/unwound G.

Taking the S-H through its paces involved a variety of amps, including a 1961 Fender Bandmaster 2x12 combo and '61 Fender tube-reverb unit, where the S-H’s neck pickup had a full, fat jazz tone that belied its lighter strings by producing no tinny twang. With neck and bridge pickups engaged, the S-H achieved a vocal-like nasal tone, reminiscent of classic electric blues and R&B—shades of B.B. circa 1955. The bridge pickup has enough punch and bite to cut through a backing track with clean tone and is perfect for funk rhythm and Motown-style riffs. Similarly pleasing results can be



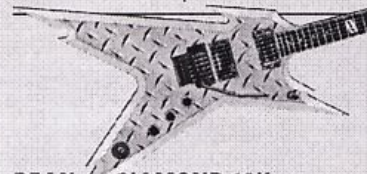
BABICZ FINGERSTYLE ACUTE SUNBURST "LIMITED"

The Babicz Fingerstyle Acute Limited has a solid Engelmann spruce top and solid rosewood back and sides. It’s equipped with the award winning L.R. Baggs iMix Onboard dual-pickup system. Read more at babiczguitars.com.



CARR VICEROY

Carr Amplifiers’ Viceroy is a Class A 6L6-based hand-wired amp with Reverb, variable Drive control, and footswitchable Mid Boost. Visit carramps.com.



DEAN DIAMOND 10K

The Dean Dime Razorback 10K has a mahogany body, locking Floyd Rose vibrato, Duncan Dimebucker, black Grover tuners, and Dimebag Darrell Abbott’s trademark traction knobs. Its mahogany neck is capped with the wing headstock bearing the Dime logo. Its rosewood fingerboard has a signature pearl razor blade inlay at the 12th fret. Check it out at deanguitars.com.



TAGAC SWR BASS

The Alternative Guitar and Amplifier Company’s SWR electric bass has a 30" scale, heel-less maple set neck and solid agathis body with an ebony fingerboard. It also sports a set bridge, P- and J-style pickups, bone nut and mother-of-pearl diamond inlays. Other features include chrome hardware and nickel frets. Learn more at thealternativeguitarandamplifiercompany.com.

SADOWSKY SEMI-HOLLOW

Price: \$3,495
Contact: Sadowsky Guitars Ltd,
20 Jay Street #5C, Brooklyn,
NY 11201; phone (718) 422-1123;
sadowsky.com.

Gear

had from blackface Fender Twin-Reverb, Deluxe-Reverb, and Super-Reverb combos. Moreover, plugging the S-H into a Vox AC30 and Royal Guardsman stack brought out surprisingly Casino-like Beatle timbres. And into a tweed 4x10 Bassman its tones had plenty of Chuck Berry-esque rock-and-roll grind.

Turning up the heat with more overdrive, from a Variac'd 1970 Marshall stack, Soldano SLO-100 and 4x12 cabinet and current Fender Cyber-Twin, showed the advantages of the design in a high-volume/high-gain environment. The S-H was capable of producing easily controlled harmonic feedback as well as a convincing Claptonesque "woman tone" from the neck pickup and a punchy blues-rock timbre for power chords and solo work from the bridge pickup. With different levels of gain the S-H was ideal for delivering slinky fusion lines in the

vein of Larry Carlton, John Scofield, and Robben Ford, or charging Southern Rock sounds. Clearly, this instrument is capable of being a lot more than a loud jazz guitar.

Playing the S-H with heavier strings through a few dedicated jazz rigs including a Clarus head with Razer's Edge cab, Fender Jazz Master Ultralight head and cab and Jazz Kat combo, found the guitar in its element. With flatwound strings, the stop tailpiece raised slightly and the neck pickup selected the S-H veered off smoothly into Pat Martino-George Benson-Grant Green territory. Add a touch of ambient delay to a stereo signal path and the sonic imagery of Pat Metheny is conjured forth.

Many vintage connoisseurs will find the S-H vibe to be like a better-crafted, more ergonomic ES-330 with a center block and a Les Paul shape. It is comfort-

able to play and hold and resistant to unwanted feedback. The lighter weight and vintage feel to the neck and fingerboard will warm the hearts of baby boomer guitar players but its unique tone may well attract younger players in search of an alternative versatile sound.

Like Roger's other archtops, the S-H is built in Sadowsky's Tokyo shop, supervised by Yoshi Kikuchi. Setup, fretwork, and personal touches by Roger and his crew in Brooklyn are, as usual, superb. The guitar is eminently playable right out of the box.

The S-H is an early winner. Endorsers already include John Abercrombie and Kurt Rosenwinkel and others are waiting in line. It behooves the interested player to try one of these and order soon, as it takes months to build the guitar. But the instrument is well worth the wait. Two thumbs up. — *Wolf Marshall*



DRAPESTER GUITAR COVER

Drapester guitar covers are made of cotton and protect guitars from dust and sunlight while they're on guitar stands. They stay in place without straps or ties and fit acoustic or electric guitars. Read more at drapester.com.



KORG PITCHBLACK TUNER

Korg's Pitchblack is housed in a die-cast aluminum package the size of a compact effect unit, with large LED display. Switching is true-bypass, and tuning accuracy is +/-1 cent in four modes. Learn more at korg.com.



SPECTOR NS-2JA-R

Spector's NS-2JA-R is a limited-edition reissue of the NS-2JA from 1983 and uses the original Spector NS curved-body and neck-pocket design. It has a maple body, chrome hardware (Leo Quan bridge, Schaller tuners) and EMG active pickups. See it at spectorbass.com.



STRINGDOG ARMOR GOLD CABLE

StringDog's Armor Gold cable is hand-made in the U.S. with double-layer heat shrink, G&H Show Saver plugs, industrial polymer-mesh jacket, and medium-low capacitance. It's available in lengths of 10 or 20 feet. For more info, visit StringDog.net.

Worth the Wait

Taylor's New SolidBody Guitars

FOR YEARS, BOB TAYLOR fended off the question, "When are you going to build a solidbody guitar?" Well-known as a builder of top-notch acoustics, for his company, Taylor Guitars, the step seemed logical and maybe even a little overdue. And when Taylor released the semi-acoustic T5 three years ago, it was greeted by many as a tantalizing hint. But again, "When?"

"When we have something to offer..." was Bob's oft-repeated reply.

Then, as part of the general process of exploration and experimentation that goes on at the company, longtime employee David Hosler devised a new pickup. Instead of dropping it in yet another Strat or Les Paul clone,

Hosler and Bob Taylor agreed the new pickup demanded a new guitar.

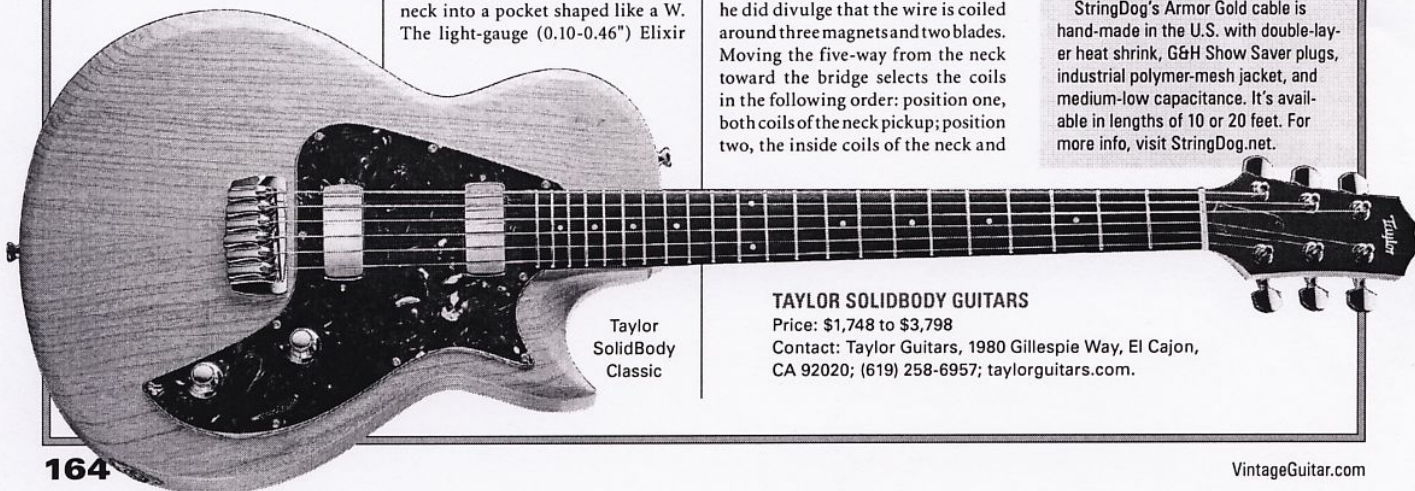
What they came up with is the SolidBody series with variations dubbed Classic, Custom, and Standard. All are flat-front/single-cut-away guitars with two pickups, a standard Taylor C-shaped neck (the same used on their acoustics), a 24 7/8" scale, and a nut that measures 1 11/16" wide.

The Classic's neck is maple with a rosewood fingerboard, while the Custom and Standard sport necks of sapele with ebony fretboards. All use Taylor's sealed tuners, and the very flat 15" radius fretboard has 22 medium frets. The neck is attached with Taylor's proprietary T-Lock system, where an Allen bolt goes through the body and pulls the neck into a pocket shaped like a W. The light-gauge (0.10-0.46") Elixir

strings end at the aluminum bridge, which is, like the pickups, a new design. There are only two control knobs — one for volume, the other for tone — and the five-way selector switch manipulates an interesting pickup-wiring configuration.

While the Classic is solid swamp ash, the Custom and the Standard are chambered. The Custom has a sapele or blackwood body with either walnut or koa top, while the Standard has a sapele body with a tamo ash top. The Custom and the Standard are edged with ivory binding.

The Classic and the Custom are both loaded with the new Style 1 pickups, while the Standard has traditional-style humbuckers. While Hosler is keeping tight-lipped about the exact construction of the Style 1, he did divulge that the wire is coiled around three magnets and two blades. Moving the five-way from the neck toward the bridge selects the coils in the following order: position one, both coils of the neck pickup; position two, the inside coils of the neck and



Taylor
SolidBody
Classic

TAYLOR SOLIDBODY GUITARS

Price: \$1,748 to \$3,798

Contact: Taylor Guitars, 1980 Gillespie Way, El Cajon, CA 92020; (619) 258-6957; taylorguitars.com.