

Crescent Vanguard Cymbals

'Buttery' Feel, Warm Overtones

Cymbal Masters, in the cymbal business since 2004, had a big shakeup last year before it finally emerged with its new brand, Crescent Cymbals. Now the company enjoys complete control over quality, process, marketing and production. Its 2013 catalog offers eight individual series of cymbals. I checked out the Vanguard series 14-inch hi-hats, 18-inch crash, and 20- and 22-inch rides.

With their smaller bell and thin edges, Vanguard cymbals are marketed as having a “buttery” feel with complex, warm overtones. They are fully lathed (except for the underside of the hats) and are otherwise identical to Crescent’s unlathed Vintage series, which have a dryer sound. “The Vanguards resemble how vintage Turkish cymbals sounded when they were new, while the Vintages more closely resemble the way old vintage Turkish cymbals sound now,” said Michael Vosbein, co-owner of Crescent Cymbals.

The way my sticks interacted with the outer areas of the Vanguards made for some great response while providing a nice musical wash. It might be hard to grasp what a “buttery” feel means, but once you experience a cymbal like this, it starts to make sense: It has to do with the thinness of the cymbal and the response it gives as it reacts to the strike of the stick.

The smaller bell of the Vanguard cymbals allows for a smooth transition,



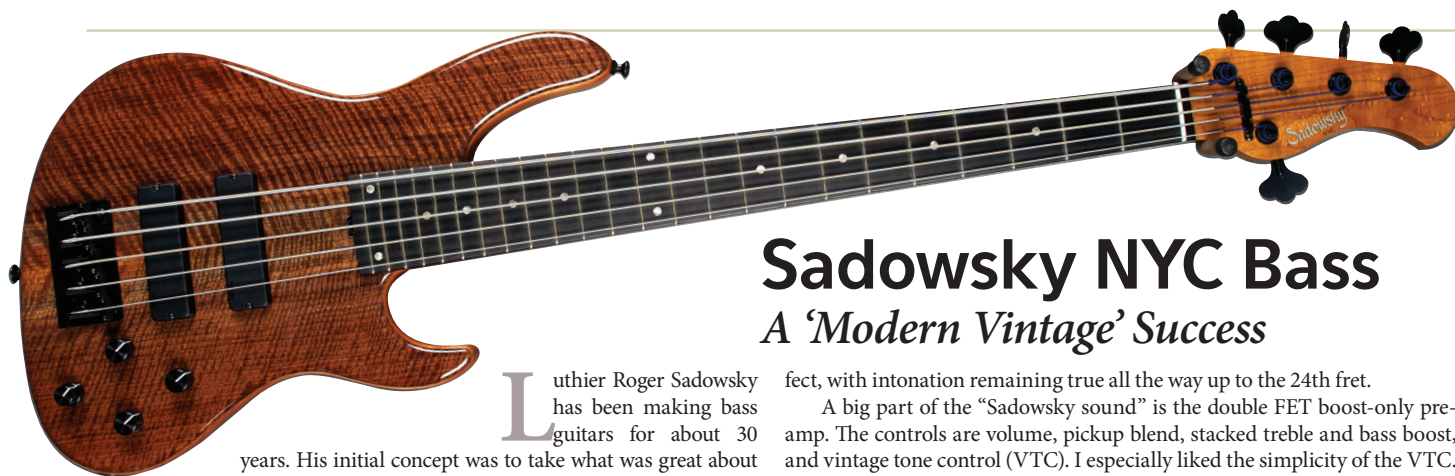
timbre- and volume-wise, when moving from the middle of the cymbal to the bell area. I also didn’t feel the need to compensate velocity-wise when playing the bell in order to keep the volume in check compared to the rest of the cymbal.

The Vanguards’ thinness is especially noticeable when playing with brushes. I found them to be very responsive to even the lightest touch, which makes them 100-percent appropriate for playing jazz. These cymbals also have a great wobble that is a telling sign of their thinness. The tone of each cymbal was nice and even across the entire playing surface. The hi-hats had a similar matching timbre and smooth delivery that complemented the rides and crashes.

With the Vanguards and other premium cymbal series constituting its product lineup, Crescent Cymbals seems to be doing a great job with its re-entry into the market. Log on to youtube.com/user/cymbalmasters/featured to check out video documentations of all of the company’s cymbals.

—Matt Kern

crescentcymbals.com



Sadowsky NYC Bass

A 'Modern Vintage' Success

Luthier Roger Sadowsky has been making bass guitars for about 30 years. His initial concept was to take what was great about Fender basses and improve them with a now-legendary active pre-amp and quality shielding. Over the years, much tweaking has taken place, and eventually the “modern vintage”-styled Sadowsky NYC 24-fret 5-string bass was born.

First impressions: it’s gorgeous, lightweight, polished. The bass came with a figured-walnut top on a mahogany body and an ebony fingerboard on a roasted maple neck. It weighed only 7.85 pounds due to its chambered body, which not only alleviates shoulder fatigue but also improves tone/sound.

Now, let’s play. I immediately noticed the 19mm string spacing, wider than either of my current 5-string basses. The nut goes from 1 7/8 inch at the nut to 3 inches at the 24th fret. The wider string spacing is comfortable, the upper reaches of the fingerboard are accessible and playability is superb. The bolt-on neck (featuring two graphite strips to eliminate dead spots) was per-

fect, with intonation remaining true all the way up to the 24th fret.

A big part of the “Sadowsky sound” is the double FET boost-only pre-amp. The controls are volume, pickup blend, stacked treble and bass boost, and vintage tone control (VTC). I especially liked the simplicity of the VTC. It works just like an old P- or J-Bass tone control and doubles as an active/passive push-pull (functions in passive or active mode). In the active mode, you can dial up a multitude of sounds in an instant, with the treble and bass boost affecting subtle or dramatic changes. The bass I tested came with two Sadowsky soapbar humbuckers, both placed closer to the bridge than in a traditional configuration (to optimize the punchiness of the B string).

On gigs from concert halls to tiny clubs to hotel ballrooms, the NYC 24-fret 5-string gave me ample tonal shaping options. To get all of this you must pay a price, though. The foot-in-the-door price on the NYC 24-fret 5-string is \$4,275, and the bass I tested retails for \$5,375. If budget is an issue, the made-in-Tokyo Sadowsky Metro basses start at \$2,350. Many bass makers try to achieve “modern vintage.” Sadowsky succeeds, with style.

—Jon Paul

sadowsky.com