

# SADOWSKY CUSTOM STRAT

*(as reviewed in Guitar Shop Magazine)*

**R**oger Sadowsky is one of the world's best-known luthiers, catering to such rock luminaries as Keith Richards, Mike Stern, Will Lee, Bruce Springsteen, and John Scofield, among others. The Sadowsky guitar I sampled is a custom Strat with a bolt-on neck. It's body is made of lightweight alder with a fine quilted-maple top, which also has a contour where a player's arm can rest for playing comfort. With its beautiful cherry sunburst finish, the guitar is visually quite appealing, but the real proof is in the sound and playability.

The neck on this Strat-style guitar is made of maple with a tightly grained pau ferro fingerboard and a very light finish for a super smooth, almost bare-wood feel. Other attributes include a very flat radius, 22 jumbo frets and standard Teflon nut. The width feels consistently narrow across the fingerboard, from the nut all the way down to the 22nd fret. From front to back, the neck is thin and round, somewhat like a '60s Fender Strat. The frets' edges are finished to impeccable perfection—in fact, they are so smooth that you absolutely cannot feel any burrs anywhere. (If only every guitar's frets could feel this good!) Actually, fretwork is a specialty of Sadowsky's shop and this guitar is a prime example. Like Fender Strats, the headstock has very little pitch, and it also uses custom-made Sperzel Trimlok tuning gears, which have shorter posts for the third, fourth, fifth and sixth strings for greater down-bearing pressure behind the nut. Finally, one stringtree guides the first and second strings. No squeaks or sticking here and the guitar holds its tuning with exceptional accuracy.

The bridge is a vintage-style Gotoh tremolo with custom-made cast steel saddles for better sustain and more accurate intonation, while the pickups are Sadowsky's own design and specially wound by DiMarzio. This guitar is loaded with two humbuckers and a single-coil in the middle position a standard Strat-style configuration (though different bridges and pickups are available upon request). There is a five-way pick-up selector and Sadowsky's

custom electronics, which feature an active midrange boost and gain control that operates on a 9-volt battery. A three-way mini toggle switch controls the preamp modes: midrange boost, midrange boost plus gain, or bypass. The preamp's gain control can further be adjusted by the trim pot inside the control cavity for a more or less aggressive boost. Other controls include volume, midrange boost, and tone. The tone pot has a push/pull feature to select either a .05 mf (microfarad) or .02 mf capacitor for more versatility of the tone control when using different pickup combinations.

The neck pickup is warm and fat-sounding with good clarity and no muddiness, even with the midrange boost and gain on full. The bridge pickup is louder and hotter than the neck or middle pickup and has a more aggressive fat, punchy sound for great lead tone with a slight edge to really cut through. In the in-between positions on the selector (second and fourth), the centered single-coil can combine with a splitcoil of either humbucker. The volume in these positions is slightly lower in order to produce accurate Strat sounds. There are really endless varieties of sounds that you can achieve when messing around with the different combinations of pickups and electronics. The push/pull capacitor selector is a great idea, since the .05 mf capacitor lends itself well to the neck pickup, while the .02 mf capacitor works great for lead tone on the bridge pickup. As for the preamp, this one is surprisingly quiet in comparison to some of the others I've tried in the past, including the one in my own guitar. Rats.

To sum it all up, this is definitely a workingman's axe designed for versatile players who need one guitar that can produce virtually any tone on demand. I have no doubt that many studio players will appreciate the quality and useful features of this Sadowsky. It ain't cheap, but if you wear many musical hats for live or studio work, give Roger a call and see for yourself why I'm so impressed.