

SADOWSKY

MetroExpress Hybrid PJ

Fancy a Sadowsky that doesn't break the bank? Stuart Clayton does

SADOWSKY
www.sadowsky.com

\$899

Sadowsky is one of the most recognizable names in the bass community. Founded in the late Seventies by Roger Sadowsky, the company initially built a reputation for Fender bass repairs and modifications and began to attract wider attention after they famously installed a Stars Guitars preamp in Marcus Miller's 1977 Jazz bass. Their own range of instruments was launched in the early Eighties, and in the years since, the company has amassed an enviable endorsee list that includes Verdine White of Earth, Wind And Fire, Tal Wilkenfeld, Darryl Jones, and Adam Clayton, as well as noted session players such as Will Lee, Hugh McDonald of Bon Jovi, and Willie Weeks. Although highly desirable instruments, Sadowsky basses have always occupied the upper end of the market.

In the early 2000s, Roger Sadowsky began a collaboration with Japanese luthier and protégé Yoshi Kikuchi. The result was the MetroLine series of instruments, a range of basses built in Japan to Sadowsky's exacting standards. These popular instruments were more affordable than their US-built cousins, and were able to introduce the brand to a significantly wider audience. Overwhelmed with the logistics of handling worldwide distribution of production instruments by himself, Sadowsky entered into a partnership with Warwick in 2018, resulting in the new MetroExpress range. Built in China, but with production overseen by Warwick's builders, these instruments are built and marketed under the new Roger Sadowsky Design trademark.

Build Quality

The MetroExpress sports a familiar Jazz bass-style body, which is comfortable overall, despite slightly sharper edge contouring than is often found on similarly shaped instruments. The bass is lightweight

and comfortable to use in both seated and standing positions. This is largely thanks to the use of okoume—a lightweight African hardwood—for the body. Although this is a seemingly unusual choice, this wood has in fact been used by Sadowsky at its NYC custom shop for several years, reportedly pairing well with all the common fingerboard woods. The fingerboard of this instrument is morado, sometimes known as pau ferro, likely chosen because of the CITES restrictions around the more traditionally used rosewood. Maple is also an option, as is a tigerstripe ebony board for the fretless version.

With the significant headstock mass found here, you might expect a certain amount of neck dive. However, thanks to the use of lightweight open-back Sadowsky tuners and a chunky bridge piece at the other end of the instrument, we're pleased to find that this is very minimal. The neck is smoothly finished and quick to navigate, while the fretwork is excellent across the instrument. Upper fret access is very good up to the 20th fret, with the heel slightly impeding access to only the final, 21st fret. The neck join is a plateless design, with each of the four bolts sitting neatly in recessed ferrules.

Sounds And Playability

The MetroExpress has a P/J pickup configuration with a simple control set comprising Volume, Blend, Treble, and Bass pots. I began my tonal experimentation with the Blend control centered, and the boost-only tone controls turned down. The natural tone of the instrument is exemplary: The top end is unobtrusive, while the lower end pairs clarity with grunt in a satisfying manner.

Soloing the split-P pickup offers up a suitably Precision-inspired tone, albeit one with the underlying oomph that comes courtesy of the onboard preamp. Similarly, soloing the bridge pickup yields a punchy midrange that works perfectly for intricate fingerstyle lines. Blending the two obviously provides even more options. The two EQ controls offer significant boosts to the treble and bass frequencies, although these are best used judiciously: a gentle treble boost adds the required bite for slapped or picked lines, while palm-muted grooves are well-served with a gentle bump to the low-end frequencies. As someone more accustomed to a three-band EQ, I was surprised to find myself not missing a midrange control: The bite of the bridge pickup with the added punch from the treble boost fits the bill perfectly.

Conclusion

Sadowsky basses are justifiably revered by the low-end community, with the new MetroExpress range looking certain to bolster that position even further. In partnering with Warwick to produce an affordable range of instruments, Sadowsky now have an impressive offering in all price points. The beginner or first upgrade end of the marketplace is a crowded area, for sure, but with the MetroExpress boasting high levels of build quality paired with a killer sonic palette, they are onto a winner. Highly recommended. ■



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Price | \$899
Made In | China
Color | Vintage white, gloss finish
Body | Okoume
Neck | Maple, 34"
Neck Joint | Bolt-on
Nut | Bone
Fretboard | Marado (maple also available)
Frets | 21, nickel silver
Pickups | Sadowsky P-Style split coil (neck) and Sadowsky J-Style single coil (bridge)
Electronics | Active Sadowsky with two-band EQ
Controls | Volume, Balance, Treble, Bass
Hardware | Sadowsky
Weight | 9.5 lbs
Case/gig bag included | Gigbag
Left-hand option available | Yes

WHAT WE THINK

Plus | Broad, versatile tonal range
Minus | Nothing significant
Overall | An impressive—and affordable—bass

BP RATING

BUILD QUALITY
 ★★★★★★
 SOUND QUALITY
 ★★★★★★
 VALUE
 ★★★★★★

