

## ALUMNI PROFILE

## Alum's passion strikes the right chord

The smell of the alder wood as he gently sands the body. The feel of the finished guitar cradled in his lap. The tight, punchy twang when he plucks the low-B string.

Roger Sadowsky '70 loves it all. He is the man behind the music of legends like Bruce Springsteen, Prince and Gilberto Gil. Famous artists and aficionados seek him out for handcrafted guitars, 80 hours in the making. As owner and founder of Sadowsky Guitars, he has created outlets for their musical muse for more than three decades.

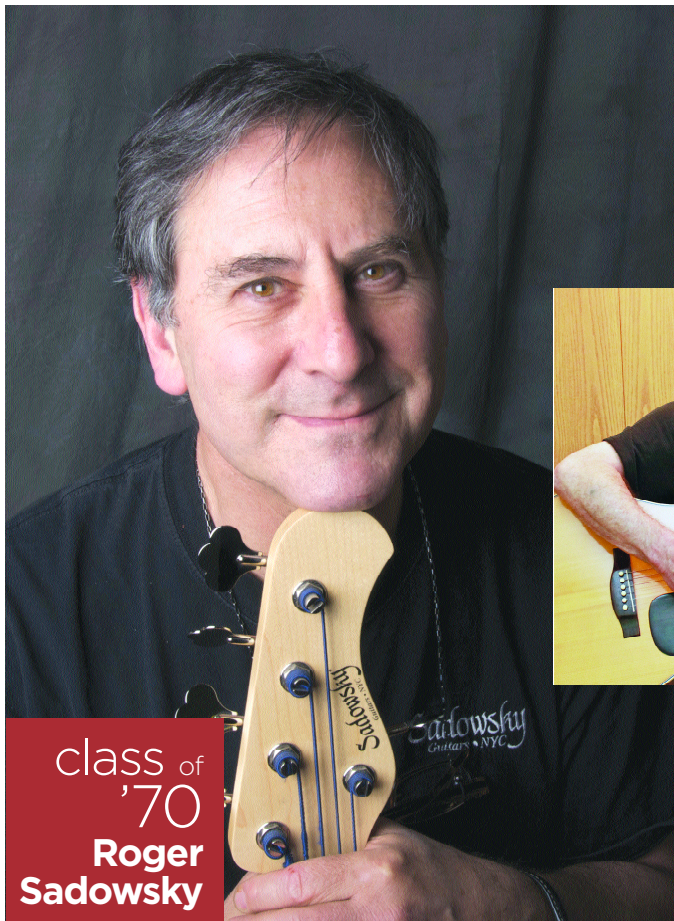
Oddly enough for a guitar man, Sadowsky couldn't strum a note until he was in his 20s. A folk festival his junior year changed all that. There were a lot of hippies and macramé and wonderful music made with banjos and acoustic guitars, he remembers.

"I felt at home there," he says.

He bought a \$40 guitar the next day and taught himself the chords. He played on campus with former Assistant Professor and former Interim Provost Frederick Fidura, a 30-year veteran of the Department of Psychology, who was a mentor. He still considers the retired professor one of the most influential people in his life.

It was because of Fidura, Sadowsky says, that "I really became committed to doing things the best that I could. That is a feeling and a life experience that has always stayed with me. I've applied it to everything in my life."

After earning his bachelor of science at Geneseo, focusing on psychology, Sadowsky



Roger Sadowsky '70 found his muse creating handmade guitars.

landed a primo spot in Rutgers University's renowned graduate program. Two years in, he knew it wasn't his calling. Instead, he followed his dream of becoming a master guitar-maker.

"I thought, 'If I can implant an electrode in a rat's brain, I could build a guitar,'" he says.

Renowned craftsman Augie LoPrinzi offered him an apprenticeship in 1972.

"... I woke up thinking about guitars. I went to sleep thinking about guitars," says Sadowsky. "No matter how dif-

ficult something was, I loved every bit of it."

Seven years later, he launched Sadowsky Guitars in New York City. The first few years, he worked seven days a week, 12 hours a day in a studio that doubled as an apartment — with a hot plate and a toilet in one closet and a shower in the other. His big break came in 1982, when Paul Simon's guitar broke as he and Art Garfunkel rehearsed their reunion tour. They came to Sadowsky, who later built a custom guitar for Simon.

Sadowsky has kept his shop small but his list of clients steadily grows, including U2 and Prince. Many clients are church or part-time musicians who want a quality instrument.

Sadowsky completes the delicate neck work and inspects each of the 25 or so guitars



Above, Frederick Fidura plays the guitar Roger Sadowsky '70 built for him.

produced each month in his Brooklyn shop. His instruments are sold in 23 countries.

Former mentor Fidura is proud that Sadowsky discovered his calling, inside the lab or out.

"I think of that as part of being one of my very best students," says Fidura. "I feel it's exciting that he found something very unique at which he excels."

Fidura, in fact, has a Sadowsky original acoustic. And, he still plays the old Martin he jammed on with Sadowsky at Geneseo decades ago. Sadowsky added an intricate inlay to the guitar, of which there are only two in the world.

Sadowsky has the other.

— Kris Dreessen

PHOTOS PROVIDED