

Sadowsky Semi-Hollow Archtop Guitar

By Frank A. DiBussolo D.M.A.



Roger Sadowsky is a genius! True genius is the art of simplifying the complex and making the resultant product accessible to the masses. In this case the masses are guitarists in search of an instrument that will deliver the nuances, tone, clarity and desired effect of their respected genres. Such is the case with Sadowsky's semi-hollow body guitar. While the idea of a hybrid instrument that combines the best of two worlds—the hollow-body and solid-body—is not a new one,

Roger redesigned the concept and took into consideration some insights that players have been expressing for years. The result is a highly playable beautiful guitar with an affordable \$3,495.00 price tag.

Those of you who are familiar with me and my work know that I am a staunch proponent of the big old 16 or 17 inch arch tops for playing jazz and *for getting the sound*. Well, I have had the good fortune of Roger lending me one of these to play for a few weeks, and I still have *the sound*! This is because Roger's goal here was not to make another 335-type of instrument, but to make a guitar that would produce a great jazz timbre at much higher volume levels than a traditional archtop without feeding back. The two-pickup configuration allows enough versatility to play a wide variety of musical styles. I don't play a great deal of commercial music anymore, but the versatility this instrument affords is astounding. By the way, a great demo of the sonic range and diversity of the instrument, and some great playing to boot by Jack Zucker, can be viewed on the Sadowsky web site on the semi-hollow page.

The instrument Roger loaned me was a beautiful caramel-burst and finished with Roger's nitrocellulose laquer. Sadowsky pays strict attention to details, so the aesthetics of the guitar are outstanding. It is very comfortable to hold and play. Roger had his guys set up

this guitar with a set of flatwound strings .013 to .056 gauge, and the action was perfect! If you didn't know already, part of his genius is in setup, and even though his guitars are made in Japan under the Sadowsky Tokyo luthier Yoshi Kikuchi, each guitar sold in the U.S. receives the final fretwork and setup at Roger's NY shop. This one played wonderfully! The guitar has an understated elegance that at once gives it a muscular yet refined appearance. It does not have a pickguard installed, but a nice ebony guard is included, should you wish to put it on (which can be done without an engineering degree). Roger did not want holes in the guitar if you decided not to install the pickguard.

The appointments are nickel-plated and include a stop tailpiece, Tune-o-matic-type bridge, two Sadowsky humbucker pickups and tuning gears with ebony knobs. The electronic setup is a three-position toggle switch and master volume and master tone controls (I really like this feature over the traditional two and two setup). The neck is mahogany, fitted with a South American rosewood fingerboard with pearl dot inlaid position markers. It is joined to the body at the 15th fret and is a 24 3/4 inch scale length that is 1 11/16 inches wide at the nut, with 22 frets. A long scale 25.2 inch version is also available. Essentially, what Roger has done was to take a Jimmy Bruno archtop model, keeping the 14 3/4 inches at the lower bout, and like all Sadowsky archtops, with a five-ply laminate top but reducing the depth to 1 3/4 inches, deepen the cutaway for ease in access to the higher positions, and install a scalloped or chambered center block made of spruce rather than the more common maple. This gives the guitar a nice, sustaining quality, but still produces the woody overtones that give this instrument its unique voice. As a bonus, this design makes the guitar lightweight (about six pounds), perfect for the road and long gigs! Also included is a deluxe hardshell case with a very comfortable handle.

I played it in a number of different venues, including a studio, and it performed every job well. From mellow, straight-ahead jazz to blues to commercial dance and even to my limited rock licks, the Sadowsky Semi-Hollow did it all! The three F's (fit, finish and frets) are impeccable. So you gotta ask yourself how Roger Sadowsky gets this level of quality and still manages to keep it affordable. Easy; he's a genius.

Visit www.sadowsky.com for more information
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