

behind the nameplate



Sadowsky Guitars is a guitar, bass guitar, and preamp maker located in Long Island City, New York. The company was started in 1979 by master craftsman Roger Sadowsky. The small company is unique in that it deals directly with its customers. If you're unable to visit Sadowsky Guitars in person, they will build and ship an instrument on seven-day approval. Sadowsky NYC instruments are manufactured in New York. Their Metro line is made by Sadowsky Tokyo and is also available from a few, select dealers.

Sadowsky[®] Guitars

You were pursuing a PhD in psycho-biology, studying animal behavior, when you were young. How did you go from that to building guitars and basses?

Sadowsky: I started playing guitar at the end of my junior year in college. I discovered guitar making in the 1972 edition of *The Whole Earth Catalog*. The guitar passion overtook my interest in graduate school and I became obsessed with becoming a guitar maker. I quit graduate school to work with Augie LoPrinzi of LoPrinzi Guitars in 1972.

Sadowsky not only builds instruments, but also does repair work. Did you start out doing repair work before getting into building? And do they inform one another?

Sadowsky: When I left LoPrinzi Guitars in 1974, I thought it would be easier to make a living doing repairs because it would take years to develop a great rep as a builder. I think that repair guys make better builders as they learn all the things that can go wrong with instruments. For 25 years I built and repaired, but for the last 10, I only do repairs on Sadowsky instruments.

Who were some of your first endorsers and how did you get the instruments into their hands?

Sadowsky: When I started my business in 1979, my clients were all the top NYC session musicians. I connected with Marcus Miller and Will Lee at that time and began making basses for them in 1982. They were the bass players that helped launch me as a bass builder. I made six guitars for Prince in 1984 for the Purple Rain tour and began making guitars for Paul Simon around the same time. My connection with the more "famous" players came from the guitar techs and roadies who would bring me their instruments for repair work.

Though you also build guitars, the Sadowsky brand seems to have become synonymous with the bass guitar. Why do you think that is?

Sadowsky: Guitar players are always happy with a great basic guitar. I was one of the early proponents of active electronics and this was embraced by bassists much more than guitarists.

Sadowsky is one of the few brands you don't find in the big music retail chains. Why does selling directly appeal to you?

Sadowsky: I had an epiphany in the early '80s that the satisfaction for me was not so much in making the guitar as in the feedback from my clients who were playing them. I decided I wanted to deal directly with the players, rather than sell to music stores.