

Sadowsky Jimmy Bruno Archtop: Little Axe, Big Sound

The Jimmy Bruno archtop from luthier Roger Sadowsky looks great, plays smoothly and produces a tone that's much bigger than its physical size. Featuring a compact body, laminate construction and impeccable workmanship, this axe is definitely a player.

An expert setup and repairman, Sadowsky got into hollow-body guitar construction after spending 15 years working on Jim Hall's D'Aquisto. The Jim Hall signature model was the builder's first archtop, sporting a larger body design. Building on the success of the Hall, Sadowsky teamed up with jazz guitarist Jimmy Bruno to create this second archtop signature model.

The Bruno scores high on both appearance and workmanship. The design is simple yet elegant. The craftsmanship is impeccable and the nitro-cellulose lacquer finish highlights the sunburst stain and flamed maple body.

The instrument felt comfortable in both standing and sitting positions. Its body measures a sleek 14 ³/₄ inches at the lower bout with a depth of 2 ³/₄ inches. The guitar features a single cutaway design constructed with five-ply maple laminate. A single custom-wound gold-plated pickup is mounted into the top, as are the ebony volume and tone knobs. The bridge, tailpiece and pickguard are also ebony. The neck is solid mahogany with an ebony fingerboard and 24 ³/₄-inch scale length (22 frets total); it joins the guitar body at the 15th fret.

The guitar performed wonderfully. The tone was big, clear and warm without the heavy midrange that full-sized archtops are prone to have. In fact, Sadowsky designed the Bruno to maximize the tonal characteristics of the amplified sound. The combination of smaller size, laminate maple top and cut-in pickup mounting helps reduce the feedback problems that occur with many archtops, especially in larger and solid carved-top designs. This guitar is practical and functional. At a price of \$3,995, the Bruno archtop competes and even excels over many higher-priced jazz models. —Keith Baumann



» Ordering info: sadowsky.com