

## Ibanez Pat Metheny PM200 & PM2

### Old Friends, New Archtops

The relationship between Ibanez and guitarist Pat Metheny dates back to the late 1970s, when the company first approached the young artist at a concert in Japan. The resulting partnership has produced numerous Metheny Signature models over the years, and Ibanez recently overhauled those offerings with the introduction of two new Metheny archtop guitars: the PM200 and PM2.

The two new Pat Metheny Signature guitars share many of the same aesthetics and design aspects as their predecessors but are targeted at very different customers. The Japanese-built PM200 is the high-end option, with a list price of \$4,666. The PM2 is the first Signature guitar to be included in Ibanez's Chinese-manufactured Artstar line and represents the affordable alternative with a list of \$1,333.

The new Pat Metheny Signature models feature a single cutaway design with maple top, back and sides and a single neck-mounted humbucker pickup. Both instruments feature a set-in 22-fret neck with a 24 3/4-inch scale length. The inlay patterns on the ebony fingerboard and headstock are virtually identical as well. However, when playing the guitars side by side, their differences become considerably

more apparent.

There is no doubt that the PM200 is the superior guitar in terms of its playability and tone. Available for a street price of about \$3,499, the PM 200 uses a Silent 58 pickup, a Gotoh floating bridge and a solid ebony PM tailpiece. It has a body depth of 4 1/4 inches, compared to the shallower 3 3/8 inches of the PM2, and also a wider bout of 16 1/2 inches, compared to the narrower 15 3/4 inches of the PM200 model. The neck profile is slimmer on the PM200, and I found it much more comfortable to play than the slightly chunkier PM2 neck. The cutaway is deeper as well, allowing easier access to the higher frets. The tone is fat, warm and smooth, and a nice bite becomes available when you open up the tone pot.

The PM2 is solid jazz guitar, considering its attractive \$999 street price. The Super 58 pickup performs well but is definitely not as smooth or clean as the Silent 58 on the PM200. The PM2 features an Art-1 floating bridge, a KT30 wire trapeze tailpiece and, like the PM200, it also features gold-plated hardware throughout. Overall playability definitely exceeded my expectations for a guitar in this price range.

Ibanez has done a nice job in re-engineering its Pat Metheny Signature models. Both the PM200 and PM2 are quality instruments and offer a good set of options for both the serious pro and the aspiring amateur jazz guitarist. —Keith Baumann

[ibanez.com](http://ibanez.com)



## Sadowsky SS-15 Archtop

### Fat Sound, Thin Package

Featuring a fully hollow body packed into a sleek thinline profile, the SS-15 from Sadowsky Guitars bridges the gap between traditional full-bodied archtops and semi-hollow instruments.

The inspiration for the SS-15 grew out of requests from customers who loved the Sadowsky Semi-Hollow guitar but wanted an acoustic version for playing jazz. Using the Semi-Hollow as a template, Sadowsky created a guitar that shared its same basic dimensions but did not utilize a center block within the body chamber. Instead, the SS-15 uses traditional tone bar bracing, leaving the guitar completely hollow inside and resulting in a greatly enhanced acoustic response.

Luthier Roger Sadowsky said he was looking to create a guitar that is easier to travel with but still maintains the traditional archtop tone and feel. In addition, the instrument needed to perform well in amplified situations. The SS-15's 14 3/4-inch body is actually 1/8 inch deeper than the Semi-Hollow and features a slightly wider 1 3/4-inch neck profile. Like Sadowsky's archtop guitars, the SS-15 is constructed from five-ply maple laminate. The appointments are straightforward and traditional, with a solid ebony tailpiece and matching abbreviated floating ebony pickguard. Basic vol-

ume and tone knobs control the single custom-wound PAF-style pickup mounted at the neck position.

I was struck by how lightweight the SS-15 is. Playing unamplified, there is a surprising amount of acoustic resonance, with the body vibrating in response to each note. The 14-fret neck is extremely comfortable, and the wider string spacing makes the guitar great for finger-style playing.

The SS-15 features the True Tone saddle, which is a fully intonated ebony bridge top developed by Sadowsky that allows for better intonation compared to a standard archtop bridge. The SS-15 ships with two True Tone bridges: one compensated for a wound G string and a second for an unwound G. The amplified tone of the SS-15 is simply gorgeous, reminiscent of a classic archtop.

Delivering true archtop tone in a thinline body makes the SS-15 unique, and at \$4,175 it will definitely carve out its own niche in the market. —Keith Baumann

[sadowsky.com](http://sadowsky.com)

