

A high-quality acoustic guitar with a light-colored, textured top and a dark, glossy finish on the sides and back. The guitar is shown from a front-facing perspective, highlighting its modified dreadnought body shape. The soundhole is visible, featuring a decorative green and white pattern. The bridge is black with a white saddle and six tuning pegs. The neck is dark with a fretboard and strings. A circular badge in the top left corner provides product details.

**Ervin  
Somogyi**

Modified Dreadnought

Handmade for

**£21,995**



**PRICE: £21,995**

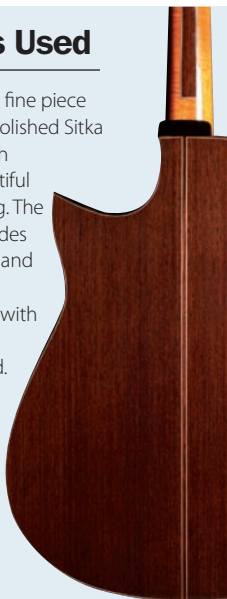
# Ervin Somogyi Modified Dreadnought

The name Ervin Somogyi is synonymous with unparalleled quality. Richard Thomas gets to grips with a guitar that will certainly stretch your wallet.

**“Decoration is kept simple... black and white purfling and a stained glass effect soundhole rosette”**

## Woods Used

The top is a fine piece of French polished Sitka Spruce, with some beautiful cross-silking. The back and sides are wenge, and the neck is mahogany with an ebony fingerboard.



In the world of acoustic guitar lutherie there can be few names more revered than that of Ervin Somogyi. Undeterred by disastrous early attempts to build a guitar as an 11-year-old Cub Scout, Ervin made his first ‘proper’ guitar as a hobby activity in 1971. His chequered career has seen him employed in mental health and working as a professional flamenco guitarist. Today, Somogyi is a highly regarded maker of both classical and steel-string guitars, and is well known as both an author on the subject of guitar making and as a teacher, with former apprentices including Michi Matsuda, Roy Kraut, Mario Beauregard and current apprentice, Jason Kostal.

## Build Quality

The Modified Dreadnought which is the subject of this review is the first Somogyi guitar to be imported into the UK by dealer Trevor Moyle at the Acoustic Music Company. As the name suggests, the guitar bears a resemblance to the classic dreadnought and is dimensionally similar, with a 15% lower bout.

However, the profile is modified, giving the instrument a more pronounced waist, making it much more comfortable to play while seated.

The first thing that struck me about this instrument was the smell that greeted my olfactory senses on opening the case. Somogyi has written two volumes about the design and manufacture of the ‘responsive guitar’. Perhaps he could add a third volume – or

at least an appendix – on the ‘aromatic guitar’! No doubt the French polish finish plays a role and it looks as good as it smells. The high-grade Sitka spruce top shows some nice cross-silking. Decoration is kept simple, taking the form of black-white-black purfling and an unusual but highly effective ‘stained glass’-effect soundhole rosette. Body bindings are rosewood, while the back and sides are made of wenge – an African wood that is hard and dense, and dark brown, almost black in colour, with little figure in the grain.

The distinctively shaped ebony bridge features a substantial bone saddle – matching the bone nut – and ebony bridge pins with abalone dot inlays. The mahogany neck has a rectangular inlay of what looks like rosewood, while the smoothly finished ebony fingerboard is undecorated, save for a light coach line. The ebony-faced headstock is Somogyi’s trademark design. For me it’s a



The craftsmanship is of the absolute highest quality

## Ervin Somogyi Modified Dreadnought

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### Technical Specification

**Manufacturer:** Ervin Somogyi  
**Model:** Modified Dreadnought  
**Retail Price:** £21,995  
**Body Size:** 15 3/4" lower bout  
**Made In:** Oakland, California, USA  
**Frets:** 14 to the body, 21 total  
**Tuners:** Gotoh Super 510  
**Nut Width:** 44.4mm  
**Scale Length:** 635mm  
**Onboard Electronics:** None  
**Strings Fitted:** Elixir light  
**Left Handers:** To order, no charge  
**Gig Bag/Case Included:** Calton case

### Contact Details

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The Gotoh Super 10s function superbly



The stained glass effect rosette is exquisitely inlaid

**“For about the same money, you could buy a basic BMW 3 Series, but the Somogyi will cost you less to maintain and won’t depreciate like the car”**

little over-elaborate, but no doubt others will disagree, and I must admit that it looks better in reality than it does in photographs, for some reason. Tuners are my favourite Gotoh super 10s, with ebony buttons, which function superbly. The heel block is also distinctive and unusual, and tapers inwards towards the neck – the reverse of what is the case on most guitars.

I must say that the build quality and finish on this instrument are truly exceptional. At this price, of course, you would expect nothing less. The interior of the guitar is as immaculately finished as the exterior, and inspecting the interior through the soundhole reveals some light bracing, which should enhance its responsiveness.

### Sound Quality

The 25" scale length, 1 3/4" nut width and 2 1/4" string spacing at the bridge help to make this an easy instrument to play – and playing is what this instrument was made for. From the very first open G chord I was captivated by the sound. Overall it has a truly orchestral quality that I have found in relatively few instruments (Stefan Sobell's spring to mind). The bass is rich and mellifluous, redolent of high-end classical guitars.

It's perfectly possible to make it growl in true dreadnought fashion, but there's so much more here to explore. The mid range is similarly rich, while the trebles are clear, fat and substantial all the way up the neck. Note-to-note separation is perfect, as is the balance across the strings, making it a fingerpicker's guitar par excellence, and it is immediately obvious why players such as the late Michael Hedges made good use of Somogyi guitars. On most acoustic guitars the sound fragments somewhat as it decays. There's not a hint of this with the Somogyi, with chords decaying with exactly the same coherence as when they are first plucked. There are no stray harmonics or overtones and the purity of the sound is remarkable. Now, this may suggest that the tone is bland and uninteresting, but nothing could be further from the truth. It's quite extraordinary and something that has to be experienced first-hand to appreciate.

This is no instrument for ham-fisted strummers. It responds to every nuance of the player's touch and, in that sense, could be a little unforgiving. Nevertheless, the sheer musicality of this instrument makes it the ultimate player's guitar.

### What We Think

#### What did our test results reveal?

**Pros:** An extraordinary guitar, with unsurpassed tone and sheer musicality.

**Cons:** It's a lot of money for one guitar.

**Overall:** A truly world-class instrument.

### Conclusion

I must admit that I have struggled with some aspects of this review. It's difficult to effectively and adequately capture the character



Signature ebony fronted headstock

of the Somogyi in a relatively short piece. A particularly difficult judgement is the vexed question of value for money. It's an almost impossible judgement to make in a meaningful way. At just under £22,000 this instrument will be well out of the reach of most readers, I imagine – myself included – and it's easy to see that some will be a little cynical about the price. However, compared to the price of a professional-quality violin, the Somogyi seems relatively reasonable and it's unlikely ever to decrease in value. You could look at it this way – for about the same money, you could buy a basic BMW 3 Series saloon, but the Somogyi will cost you less to maintain and won't depreciate like the car will. Ultimately, value, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. Shakespeare famously wrote: 'Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments.' For some fortunate individual the Somogyi will be his (or her) true love and the price will not be an impediment – lucky chap!

Richard Thomas

### Acoustic Test Results

#### Our ratings explained

- 5 Stars:** Superb, Almost faultless.
- 4 Stars:** Excellent, Hard to beat.
- 3 Stars:** Good, covers all bases well.
- 2 or 1 Stars:** Below average, poor.

### Rating out of five

#### How well did this guitar fare?

Build Quality	★★★★★
Sound Quality	★★★★★
Value for Money	★★★★★