





Tanglewood TW40 O AN

A guitar that owes its good looks to a bygone age, but at a price to suit a modern budget. David Mead greets an old friend ...

“The good thing is that the trebles will almost undoubtedly mature and settle with age”

When the chaps at Tanglewood realised that they didn't have anything in their catalogue with that distinctive vintage chic, they turned to Swedish luthier Michael Sandén for some design input. The result is the new Historic series, which pays homage to some of the classic guitars from the 1940s, considered by many to be the golden era of manufacture. The glint in the TW40 O AN's eye is reminiscent of Martin's Orchestra model – and so hey, good lookin', let's get cookin' ...

Build Quality

It's a sobering thought that much of what we consider to be commonplace these days where acoustic guitar design is concerned owes an awful lot to the innovation of a handful of people around 100 years ago. Instruments which hail from that particular era are considered priceless in terms of both tone and performance and there have been many attempts since to

capture some of their iconic magic. So to begin with, I have to say that this is a fine-looking guitar, to the extent that opening its box felt like I was meeting with an old friend. That's always a good sign in my book.

In terms of vital statistics, the top of the O AN is spruce, and from the look of things, a fine specimen it is too. The back and sides are laminated mahogany as opposed to solid woods, but this is fairly commonplace at this price point. True to say that this will have an effect on the sound of the instrument, but here Michael Sandén had a cunning plan. 'Because of the price that was set on the guitars, we could not have solid wood in the back and sides,' he told me. 'I did, therefore, specify thinner bracing on the back to make it vibrate more. With the bracing we have chosen, together with the very good quality of the top, I think we have got a sound you would not expect from a guitar under £500.' This is going to make things more interesting when we reach the

Woods Used

The top is spruce, and from the look of things, a fine specimen. The back and sides are laminated mahogany, but Michael Sandén has specified thinner bracing, to allow more vibration, resulting in a better sound.



sound tests later on, but for now, let's continue with the tour of body woods and other bits and pieces.

The neck is mahogany and fairly chunky in the hand; the profiling feels like a cross between a very generous D and a slight V, although you'd probably have to experience it yourself to know exactly what I mean. In any case, it feels good in the hand.

Looking inside the body, everything looks neat and clean, while gentle probing with the fingers reveals evidence of the characteristic forward X-bracing prevalent on pre-war acoustics. It might be my imagination, but I think I can see what Michael means about the thinner bracing to the back of the guitar. I didn't venture in there with a ruler, you understand, it's just an impression.

There is a very tidy-looking piece of rosewood in place for the fingerboard, adorned with 20 medium frets which have been seated nicely and topped off with a nut and saddle made from bone. Add to this other peripherals like the mock-tortoiseshell pickguard, ivory look-alike bridge pins and



The tortoiseshell pickguard adds to the retro feel

“Looking inside the body, everything looks neat and clean, while gentle probing with the fingers reveals evidence of the characteristic forward X-bracing”

those open Waverly-style tuners and you've got one very attractive instrument. There's even a second strap pin on the heel, which comes as a very pleasant surprise.

Sound Quality

Switching over into playing mode, the O AN proves itself to be sweet-natured in tone, with a good amount of volume and projection at its disposal. There is a noticeable bias toward the trebles in the mix, but this is not unusual in guitars with such a trim depth to the body (when I measured the O AN's body I found it to be only 100 mm at its thickest point). The good thing is that the trebles will almost

What We Think

What did our test results reveal?

Pros: A great-looking and good-sounding instrument at a modest price.

Cons: A little more drive in the bass would be welcome.

Overall: The O AN fares well in a market rich with models of a similar lineage and should definitely make the shortlist for adding to your collection.

undoubtedly mature and settle with age, given the quality of the spruce used in the top, which should result

in an instrument with a sound that matches its overall good looks.

As I mentioned before, the neck is very comfortable and suits both chordal strumming and delicate fingerpicking alike with no discernible problem. There's a good balance in the playing position too; the O AN should be comfortable for either standing or sitting. All of the above leads me to suspect that we have a very capable all-rounder here, which should definitely not be overlooked in the wash of models in this price range.

Conclusion

It's always a pleasure to find an instrument that you feel at home with almost instantaneously, straight out of the box. In addition it's easy to see how Michael Sandén's design input has kept the O AN head and shoulders above the 'just another Martin-inspired instrument' league and placed it firmly in a class very much its own. The O AN is available with a pickup in the guise of the O AN E, and so players looking for a stage guitar with a bit of class should take a look.

David Mead

Tanglewood TW40 O AN

Visit www.acousticmagazine.com for all the latest guitar reviews

Technical Specification

- Manufacturer:** Tanglewood
- Model:** TW40 O AN
- Price:** £469
- Body size:** Orchestra
- Made in:** China
- Woods used:**
- Top:** Solid spruce
- Back & sides:** Laminated mahogany
- Neck:** Mahogany
- Fingerboard:** Rosewood
- Frets:** 20
- Tuners:** Open-back Waverly style
- Nut width & scale length:**
- Nut:** 44.5 mm
- Scale:** 650 mm
- Strings fitted:** Elixir Nanoweb 11-52
- Left-handers:** No
- Gig bag/case included:** None

Contact Details

Tanglewood Guitar Company
Tel: 01932 841122
Web: www.tanglewoodguitars.co.uk



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	★★★★