

Tanglewood Nashville IV Folk Model

Tanglewood set the standard for price and performance when it launched and rapidly become the UK's biggest selling acoustic brand. Now its guitars are sold in 40 countries worldwide and are becoming much more widely available in the USA and Canada. But how low can prices go and quality be maintained?

Tim Slater tries one the brand new and highly affordable Nashville IVs.

Tanglewood made its considerable reputation by offering an impressive range of high quality acoustic guitars whose superb playability, specifications and great tones defied the price ticket. Very quickly, players realised what was going on and Tanglewood became the benchmark for affordable yet high quality instruments. But its latest offerings, the Nashville IV range seem almost spookily cheap if they are to maintain the Tanglewood legend. We borrowed a Folk size model from a range that currently comprises four solid topped guitars: two pure acoustic Folk and Dreadnought models and two electro acoustic Super Folk and cutaway Dreadnought models.

You can see where Tanglewood has spent its money the moment you look at this guitar. There are no cosmetic flourishes, just decent quality woods and construction - qualities we very much approve of! And it's not as if the Nashville IV is meanly austere. The satin finish spruce on our sample Folk size model

is a very attractive piece of timber whose subtly striped grain even featured a nice bit of mild flaming around the edges. Check out the video and see for yourselves! That soft yellow spruce is a striking and attractive contrast to the bright orange African mahogany used to form the laminated back and sides.

The overall standard of workmanship is consistently tidy and complemented by a good set-up job. The fret ends are uniformly neatly finished whilst the internal kerfing that bonds and strengthens the join between the top, back and sides is about as neat as anyone could hope to find at this price range.

Playability-wise the Nashville IV Folk reflects the now popular transition to a more forgiving, almost electric guitar-like feel. Again, this is great news for GI readers who are primarily electric players, looking for an acoustic to 'just have around' or for recording. The neck is a comfy shallow

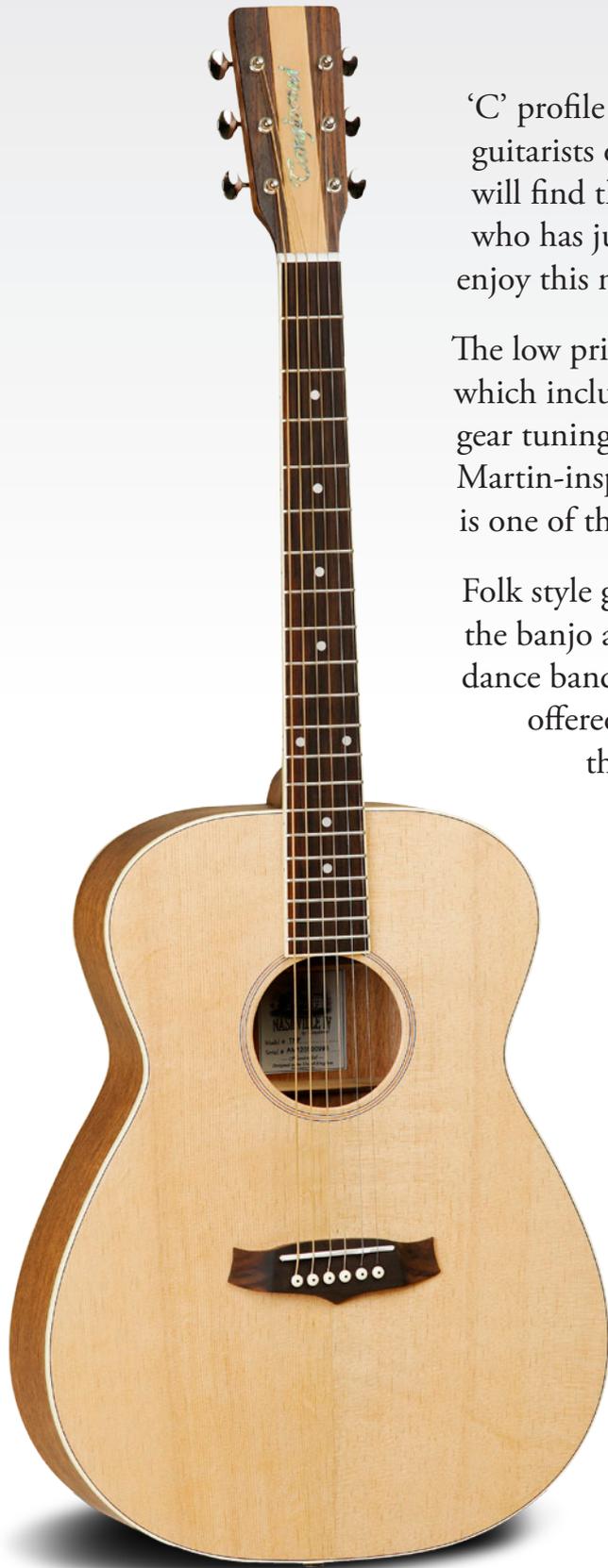


STAR RATING



CHECK THE SPEC





'C' profile that feels incredibly slim. In fact female guitarists or younger male players with smaller hands will find this a real treat! Equally, even a hairy biker who has just put down his Charvel Jackson is going to enjoy this neck, too. It will remind him of 'home'.

The low price isn't reflected in the hardware either, which includes a very reliable set of vintage-style open gear tuning machines that are mounted on a square Martin-inspired headstock whose maple/mahogany trim is one of this guitar's few bold stylistic flourishes.

Folk style guitars were essentially developed to replace the banjo as the lead stringed instrument in the dance bands of the 1940s. Their 14th fret neck join offered guitarists a greater range compared to the cumbersome Dreadnought's traditional 12th fret neck join, whilst the tighter waist helped the guitars develop more top end clarity without sacrificing the vital projection that the guitarist needed to cut through the rest of the band. So does the Tanglewood live up to that aspiration?

In fact the Nashville IV Folk sounds surprisingly sophisticated for such a relatively inexpensive guitar - markedly less raw than one might expect. It successfully conveys the Folk model's versatility, delivering enough grunt to project clearly during vigorous strumming but switching to a 'lead' style, using either fingers or a flatpick, highlights a pleasingly strident top end. Whilst its overall tone isn't as deep or authoritative as a



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Dreadnought, this little Folkie nevertheless feels very capable. You can park it in front of a good quality condenser microphone and it will chug away quite happily all day long but when you want to play with more delicacy the Nashville IV sounds smooth and articulate, too.

It could be argued that the electro-acoustic models in the Nashville IV range will ultimately offer more versatility, but the other way of looking at it is that not everyone wants a pickup and pre-amp, so

why buy one? Also, if you develop a real love for a guitar, you can choose your own pickup system and have it fitted at a later date for not a lot of money.

For the price, this Tanglewood delivers tremendous value for money and certainly upholds the brand's VFM credentials. And if you were looking for that final deal-maker? Why, it even comes with a case!

