

## Tanglewood Java TWJP & TWJF E Acoustic Guitars

The acoustic market is flooded with decent quality guitars at affordable prices. So much so that you might be forgiven for thinking it hardly matters which you choose. And then along comes Tanglewood with a game changer....

**Tom Quayle** explains.

Tanglewood's newly launched Java series of Parlour and 000 Folk guitars could easily be mistaken for high priced, boutique instruments and this is certainly what lies behind Tanglewood's wood choice and aesthetic design. In recent years there have been quite a few attempts by various budget minded companies to produce visually appealing instruments



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at a minimum cost and the results have been mixed, to say the least. Often there has been a definite case of style over substance with corner cutting and poor workmanship, coupled with poor tone and playability. Perhaps these Javas will buck the trend?

Tanglewood sent us two models to try. The TWJP is a Parlour sized guitar and the TWJF E is a 000 Folk sized guitar with Fishman Sonitone pickup for electric use. Both models are available with or without the pickup, included for a modest upcharge. The TWJP and TWJF are essentially identical in terms of specs, with solid cedar tops, amara back and sides with a wedge of spalted mango on the back, nato neck, sonokeling fretboard and bridge with mahogany binding. Amara is a beautiful looking wood, really adding some stunning grain to these two guitars and the addition of the spalted mango wedge gives a wonderful visual flair that wouldn't be out of place on the most expensive show guitar.

The TWJP features a vintage styled slotted headstock and attractive 'T' logo whilst the TWJF has a solid headstock with the full 'Tanglewood' logo with all models sporting vintage open back nickel tuners.



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STAR RATING



CHECK THE SPEC 



Both are attractive in their design but the Parlour version is certainly the prettier and invites you to pick it up thanks to its diminutive stature and comfortable body shape. The range is finished in a non-sticky, natural gloss that really makes the best of these lovely woods and adds to the boutique feel.

Thankfully, the Java range is not just visually appealing, but succeeds in the areas others have failed in the past. The build quality is superb for a guitar at this price point with no obvious corner cutting. The gloss has been applied evenly and all joints are seamless and smooth. The binding around the neck and back/sides is beautifully realised, with lovely detail on the back joints between the amara and spalted mango pieces. Fretwork is superb with smooth edges and a slightly rolled edge to the neck, which is a very comfortable C-shape on both guitars that should be very approachable for even small-handed players. Internally, each guitar is very neat with no wood shavings or lazy bracing finishing and the Fishman Sonitone is very discretely housed at the upper bout of the sound hole with tone and volume controls just sticking out for access. All internal wires are hidden away and there are no rattles or buzzes to speak of. These certainly don't feel like 'cheap' guitars and are impressively well put together for their very modest price.

Tonally the TWJP is a good performer, with a well-balanced low end that isn't too lacking in bass response but obviously less responsive than its bigger brother. Highs are well articulated if a little plasticky but that's to be expected with this body shape and price point. This plasticky nature disappeared once miked-up and revealed a bell-like character that shines for finger-

picking and single note material. Certainly the TWJP outperformed my expectations tonally and with the addition of the pickup (TWJP E model) would be a very pleasing and versatile performer. The TWJF is the more impressive tonally and has a lovely low end that responds beautifully to strumming and chord work. Both guitars are very even across their range and the Fishman Sonitone is a solid performer with a pretty natural amplified tone that would serve for most people's needs. Purchasing the non-electric version and using a more expensive pickup would make these guitars even better but the Sonitone is great for the asking price.

I found it really hard to find negative points with these guitars and it seems we really are at the point where style can at last match substance at these kinds of prices. This is great news for guitar players on a budget but these would also make very nice studio or second acoustics and they will only get better as they age. The Java series comes highly recommended!

#### Pros:

- Stunning good looks
- Great build quality
- Tonally impressive
- Great value for money.

#### Cons:

- TWJP has a slightly plasticky top end.

