

# Tanglewood Premier Deluxe Dreadnought

The latest from Tanglewood moves the company into the heart of the hotly contested upper-mid acoustic market. The brand new Premier models are designed by the great Michael Sanden and said to offer fantastic value for the high quality on offer. But was **Michael Casswell** impressed?

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## STAR RATING

### PROS:

Great design from Michael Sanden

Fine looks

Fishman pre-amp is excellent

A great stage guitar

### CONS:

Maybe better amplified than acoustic

**T**he Tanglewood brand has been around since 1988, originally producing very usable, inexpensive guitars for beginners or semi-pro players. Specialising just in acoustics, the company put a lot of passion into a market sector often let down by the big brands, whose cheaper acoustics could sometimes be pretty poor. It's no exaggeration to say that Tanglewood raised everyone's game.

The result was a huge success for the company, which rapidly became established in Europe as a major name in the acoustic world. Recently the brand has begun to sell in the USA, too.

Tanglewood's new Premier range has been designed from the strap buttons up by the Swedish master guitar builder Michael Sanden, who is one of the best in the

business - so these new models should be really special.

The sample model Tanglewood sent us was a Premier Deluxe DC, which is a large, handsome guitar, clearly made to the sort of standards that we've come to associate with the company. The cutaway makes higher access easier and the action and set-up seemed perfect, strung with 12-53 D'Addario EXP strings. As you so often find with Tanglewoods, the guitar looks more expensive than it is, with a very nice Englemann spruce solid top (not laminated!), and a highly figured 'tiger stripe' mahogany back and sides. It looks great, and in theory we should get brightness from the spruce top, with serious mid and warmth coming from the mahogany. The neck is regular looking mahogany and the fretboard and bridge are rosewood. Open die cast tuners



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complete the package, making for what I think anyone would agree is a very handsome guitar, regardless of its asking price.

This is a new range of guitars and ours was one of the first in the country, which may account for a sense that the DeLuxe was just a little ‘tight’ in its construction. This isn’t a bad thing and it’s not unusual in acoustics, which very often get better as they get played-in. We’ve all probably come across new instruments from even the most revered names in the business and wondered why they didn’t quite set the world on fire and that’s often the answer - they

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needed playing-in and a bit of time. None of which is to say the DeLuxe was bad, because it wasn't - just a little lacking in responsiveness played acoustically.

Things certainly come alive though when you plug it in and get that Fishman INK pre-amp cooking! I'm always impressed by Fishman onboard pre-amps and this is a great choice for the Tanglewood. In fact, this is the first of these newly developed Fishman packages that we

have seen in the UK and it really is very impressive, working particularly well on this Tanglewood. The three-band EQ is comprehensive and can easily change the character, from a big fat dreadnought sound, to a small bodied and delicate parlour-like delicacy. With the Fishman INK on board the Tanglewood justifies itself as a hard working live tool, or a studio 'mic it up and DI' it tool. I know if you stuck the right mic on this guitar and plugged the Fishman into the desk,



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no one would know it is a mid-priced instrument. The Fishman also gives you a very handy onboard tuner which displays very well and is accurate.

This is a very nice guitar and would certainly fit the bill for many players - especially those who need a guitar which they can use on stage, where that Fishman transducer system really would come in handy. In a lot of respects it's a very honest guitar, delivering just about everything you would expect from its size, shape and style. In other words, it's all very familiar, with the exception of the lovely tiger stripe mahogany body, which does look good, although you would have to get into the habit of telling your guitar buddies that it isn't flamed maple, it's mahogany. You'll be saying that a lot!



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So a well made, Fishman equipped, nice looking, mid-priced acoustic that does exactly what it sets out to do. There are a lot of guitars to choose from in this price range, but the Tanglewood Premier Deluxe SF is certainly one that deserves to be on your audition list! •

## TECH SPEC

### Tanglewood Premier Deluxe Dreadnought

MSRP £599 US \$ TBC

Made in: China

Shape cutaway dreadnought

Top solid aa Englemann spruce

Back tiger stripe mahogany

Sides tiger stripe mahogany

Neck (material) mahogany

Fingerboard rosewood

Bridge rosewood

Binding (top) abs black & white

Binding (side) abs ivory

Saddle pps, compensated

Nut (width) pps (43mm)

Scale length 650mm

Bridge pins abs black with white dots

Machine heads open die-cast

Finish natural gloss

EQ Fishman INK

Strings D'Addario exp16 12-53