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# ACOUSTIC

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*The story of...*

## THE WEE LOWDEN

*The small guitar with the big sound*

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RENEWING HER SPIRIT

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**40** OF THE  
YEAR'S  
GREATEST  
GUITARS  
REVIEWED **GEAR  
OF THE  
YEAR**

**GEAR ON TEST:** WEE LOWDEN, COLE CLARK, SANTA CRUZ CUSTOM SHOP, TANGLEWOOD, AUDEN



## TOP 20 GUITARS UNDER £1,000



**ORTEGA**  
RCE158SN

**RATING:** 4.6/5 **ISSUE:** 89  
**{£466}**

Ortega has clearly rethought the electro classical guitar and come up with some practical answers to players' needs to bridge the gap between the steel string and the classical. A slimmer neck, a pick-up system that is specially voiced for nylon strings and a very good sound all combine to make this instrument a serious contender for anyone wanting to add the subtle charms of the nylon string to their collection. Then there's the price – £466, including a gig bag is very reasonable.

### NEED TO KNOW

Body Size: Classical cutaway  
Made In: China  
Top: Canadian spruce  
Back and Sides: Rosewood  
Neck: Mahogany  
Fingerboard: Rosewood  
Nut Width: 48mm  
Scale Length: 650mm  
Onboard Electronics: Magnus Pro-NL  
Case: Gig bag

### CONTACT DETAILS:

Ortega Guitars  
www.ortegaguitars.com



**YAMAHA**  
L SERIES LL16

**RATING:** 5/5 **ISSUE:** 89  
**{£803}**

This guitar is a triumph of research and development as I get the impression here that every single change that Yamaha has made to their already prestigious L Series has been done for a positive reason. The re-voicing, new bracing design, wood upgrades and pickup system all combine to produce a dreadnought that sits easily in the hands while it produces a broad spectrum of contemporary tones. Yamaha has produced an instrument that ticks virtually every box.

### NEED TO KNOW

Body Size: Modified dreadnought  
Made In: China  
Top: Engelmann Spruce  
Back and Sides: Rosewood  
Neck: Mahogany/rosewood ply  
Fingerboard: Ebony  
Nut Width: 44mm  
Scale Length: 650mm  
Onboard Electronics: Passive PU  
Case: Pro gig bag

### CONTACT DETAILS:

Yamaha Guitars  
www.uk.yamaha.com



**YAMAHA**  
L SERIES LL6

**RATING:** 5/5 **ISSUE:** 89  
**{£493}**

The new refinements to the L Series from Yamaha are very worthwhile and you're sure to be seeing a lot of them in the hands of pro players. We get the impression that all the changes have got purpose and definitely not representative of a reboot just for the sake of it. The thing that impressed us most of all is the passive pickup system which sounds very good indeed and frees players from the drudge of fiddling with batteries and carrying spares when out gigging.

### NEED TO KNOW

Body Size: Modified dreadnought  
Made In: China  
Top: Engelmann Spruce  
Back and Sides: Laminated rosewood  
Neck: Mahogany/rosewood ply  
Fingerboard: Rosewood  
Nut Width: 44mm  
Scale Length: 650mm  
Onboard Electronics: Passive PU  
Case: Pro gig bag

### CONTACT DETAILS:

Yamaha Guitars  
www.uk.yamaha.com



**KREMONA**  
RC65CW

**RATING:** 4.5/5 **ISSUE:** 90  
**{£370}**

There's a keen eye for design at work here that knows what makes a sophisticated, modern instrument that doesn't skimp out on the traditional values that make nylon-strung guitars such a joy to play. The Kremona RC65 CW offers exceptional value for money and should be investigated further by all but the most picky of classical enthusiasts. Kremona is most certainly a very welcome new arrival to the UK guitar scene – and one that you'll be seeing more of in 2015.

### NEED TO KNOW

Body Size: Classical  
Made In: Bulgaria  
Top: Solid spruce  
Back and Sides: Laminated walnut  
Neck: African mahogany  
Fingerboard: Rosewood  
Neck width at nut: 52mm  
Scale Length: 650mm  
Onboard Electronics: Fishman Classic 3  
Case: Padded case

### CONTACT DETAILS:

Sutherland Trading  
www.sutherlandtrading.com



## OTHER STRINGED INSTRUMENTS



### TANGLEWOOD TWB 24M5

**RATING:** 4.5/5 **ISSUE:** 95  
**{£299}**

One of the very best things about playing guitar is that you can (relatively) easily transition one set of skills from one instrument to another. Whether you fancy trying out life on the heavy side with a full-blown electric, sliding away on a lapsteel or transcribing 'Bohemian Rhapsody' down to ukulele size, there's plenty us six-stringers can apply ourselves to and as the TWB 24 M5 from Tanglewood shows – it doesn't have to cost you the earth. Of course, there's every bit a chance that you're only interested in the banjo, too!

#### NEED TO KNOW

Head: Remo renaissance  
Made In: China  
Resonator: Maple  
Back and Sides: Maple  
Neck: Maple  
Fingerboard: Rosewood  
Tone Ring: Alloy  
Scale Length: 670mm  
Onboard Electronics: No  
Case: No

#### CONTACT DETAILS:

**Tanglewood Guitars**  
[www.tanglewoodguitars.co.uk](http://www.tanglewoodguitars.co.uk)



### NATIONAL RESOPHONIC STYLE 1 TRICONE

**RATING:** 5/5 **ISSUE:** 89  
**{£2,699}**

The whole experience of playing the Style 1 has reminded us how much we love resonators and exactly why National enjoy one of the most enviable reputations in the business for producing these types on instruments. For a company with the heritage of National, this is exactly the kind of guitar that deserves to be leading the company's image and reputation, a talisman for all that makes the resonator great. In that regard, the National Resophonic Style 1 Tricone really is faultless.

#### NEED TO KNOW

Body Size: Parlour  
Made In: USA  
Resonator: Three six-inch cones  
Back and Sides: Brass  
Neck: Spanish cedar  
Fingerboard: Ebony  
Nut Width: 1.825mm  
Scale Length: 25-21/32"  
Onboard Electronics: No  
Case: Hard case

#### CONTACT DETAILS:

**Frailers**  
[www.frailers.com](http://www.frailers.com)



### FAIRFIELD BANJO

**RATING:** 4.8/5 **ISSUE:** 89  
**{£2,800}**

The Fairfield banjo sounds great, ticking every box for sounds, playability, and construction along the way. As with guitars, the price is representative of the amount of care, attention and pure hands-on attention that has gone into its manufacture. It's also been fully and thoughtfully researched at the point of design and those contemporary tweaks like the wider fingerboard do make a great deal of difference. It's a great banjo for the player looking for that little bit extra.

#### NEED TO KNOW

Made In: UK  
Model: Standard resonator banjo  
Rim Diameter: 295mm  
Rim: Maple  
Neck: Mahogany  
Fingerboard: Ebony  
Nut Width: 34mm  
Scale Length: 670mm  
Onboard Electronics: No  
Case: Fitted hard case

#### CONTACT DETAILS:

**Fairfield Banjos**  
[www.fairfieldbanjos.com](http://www.fairfieldbanjos.com)



### KREMONA MARI UKULELE

**RATING:** 4.5/5 **ISSUE:** 92  
**{£269}**

It's hard not to be impressed by Kremona. For a relatively unheard of company it is making some capable instruments at sensible prices that could put many of its rivals to shame. The combination of good design along with great playability and value is an incredibly hard one to pull off with regularity and Kremona deserves full respect for pulling it off. The Mari feels like it has been designed with a real uke player in mind rather than someone who is simply buying one for the sake of it.

#### NEED TO KNOW

Body Size: Tenor  
Made In: Bulgaria  
Top: Solid mahogany  
Back and Sides: Solid mahogany  
Neck: Mahogany  
Fingerboard: Rosewood  
Nut Width: 36mm  
Scale Length: 430mm  
Onboard Electronics: No  
Case: No

#### CONTACT DETAILS:

**Sutherland Trading**  
[www.sutherlandtrading.com](http://www.sutherlandtrading.com)