



YAMAHA FG700S

ANOTHER IDENTIKIT ACOUSTIC, RIGHT? THAT'S WHAT WE THOUGHT, AT FIRST... WORDS: HENRY YATES

> I'm getting a sense of déjà vu...

That's the thing about acoustic guitars – they all tend to look the same. As such, you might be forgiven for taking one look at the Yamaha FG700S and assume you've already been there, played that and bought the T-shirt. If there's a more traditional looking model on the market than this entry-level dreadnought, we'll eat our pitch pipes.

No-one's pretending the FG700S looks as wild as your BC Rich, but that's not the point. When you sit down with this model you will soon start to appreciate why it deserves your attention. Yamaha acoustics are all about providing the best playing experience and tone for the lowest possible price. That may not sound sexy, but our rendition of *More Than Words* certainly did.

So what do I get for my wad?

These are the facts. The Yamaha FG700S is a Chinese-made dreadnought with a solid spruce top and a deep hourglass body made from nato mahogany. The neck is made of nato, too. It's attached to the body via a dovetail joint and topped with a rosewood fingerboard featuring the smallest fret inlays TG has ever seen. An unobtrusive rosette adorns the soundhole, and the sultry chocolate pickguard is as sexy as they come.

Cast your eyes up the neck and you'll find a traditional three-a-side headstock with die-cast chrome hardware. It was a breeze to tune this guitar to pitch and we didn't find ourselves constantly tweaking it after string bends or aggressive strum sessions, either.

Elsewhere, this guitar boasts the kind of build we have come to expect from Yamaha. This manufacturer has always paid attention to the little things, and the fact that this is the cheapest model in the FG range hasn't seen Yamaha spare the sandpaper. So far, so good, then.

WHO'S IT FOR?

Anyone who has to stop halfway through *The Who's Pinball Wizard* because their fretting hand is about to explode

INFORMATION

ORIGIN: China
TOP: Solid spruce
BODY: Nato mahogany
NECK: Nato
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
HARDWARE: Die-cast chrome
FRETS: 20
CASE: £26 to buy
LEFT-HANDER: No [Left-hand FG720S is £259]
CONTACT: Yamaha-Kemble Music (UK) Ltd 01908 366700
WEB: www.yamaha.co.uk

ALTERNATIVELY

Yamaha FG720S – £229
 Yamaha FG730S – £259
 Yamaha FG750S – £299

They sound like decent materials...

It's a great spec sheet for the price, and TG was happy to clock the FG700S' solid spruce top. While this does mean it will take a short period for the guitar's tone to 'bed in,' it should deliver a more characterful voice than its laminate equivalent and sweeten over time. That aside, the combination of spruce and mahogany is a dues-paying partnership that is often used on acoustics, thanks to the balance it strikes between warmth and bite. Rosewood is the most common material used for fingerboards, meanwhile, and shouldn't trouble anyone's fingertips.

How does it feel?

According to acoustic guitar propaganda, there's nothing more relaxing than sitting around strumming *Wonderwall* on your dreadnought. In reality, TG has come across plenty of models whose necks have made barre chords a living hell. Compared to an electric, it can be hard to muster the requisite pressure to make your riffs ring out, and that's why the Yamaha FG700S made such an impression on us. Yamaha's blurb is quick to point out that this model has a slimmer neck than most, and the difference won't be lost on you when you try some finger-twisting Nick Drake licks. This is how playing an acoustic should feel, but so rarely does. It's effortless, despite the fairly hefty body size, and doesn't make you sweat to dig out the (considerable) volume.

Can it cope with more than strumming?

Try playing anything other than open chords on many acoustic guitars and you will be rewarded with muffled notes and rattling strings. By contrast, the FG700S always encourages you to push yourself. Admittedly, its lack of cutaways means the top frets are more for show than practical use, but the

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fretboard is welcoming enough to cater for fluid slides and moderate bends. Using your fingers feels just as natural as digging in with a pick, and both techniques supply the same authoritative level of natural volume.

So is it warm or jangly?

There's a natural tendency towards the jangly side of things – fingerpicking through the strings is a particular pleasure – but much of the FG700S' tone hinges on how you play it. Plucking with fingernails nearer the bridge supplies the snap and pop of a Turin Brakes solo, while picking out basslines over the soundhole with your thumb brings in a more rounded tone that will appeal to country and folk players. We also felt this guitar lent itself particularly well to capo'd voicings, coaxing out the maximum Johnny Marr factor into an already shimmering tone.

It seems pretty cheap...

Tell us about it! TG owns an acoustic that cost considerably more than the FG700S, and going back to its woolly notes and bulky neck almost brought tears to our eyes when the Parcel Force man came for the Yamaha. For the money, it seems churlish to criticise this guitar. It's tuneful, well-built, and makes playing acoustic a lazy pleasure rather than a cramp-inducing chore. Stop looking and start listening.

FOR: A comfortable and effortless player
AGAINST: Identikit looks...

TG RATING:

