

FENDER KINGMAN ASCE £549

An all-solid wood cutaway electro dreadnought with that name on that headstock. Any good? Let's see...

THERE was a time when Fender's acoustic range was tarred with the brush of its unloved attempt to branch out in the 1960s. Today, however, Fender's affordable Asian-made range is one of the best selling acoustic brands in the world – worth another look, then?

The Kingman ASCE was released earlier this year, and not only recalls Fender's past acoustic dabblings in name – Kingman was first used on a Fender acoustic in 1966 – and in *that* headstock and logo, but also the mid-to-late 60s-style block inlays and bound fingerboard on a maple neck. Unlike the original, it's not a bolt-on – thankfully! – but a more conventional build, finished off with a tidy acoustic-style heel.

of 55mm. Put it this way, if you own a Fender electric, the Kingman is going to feel like home.

Powering comes from a Fishman under-saddle and side-mounted Presys preamp: an efficient well-proven system with accurate onboard tuner, three-band EQ and a phase switch, which not only gives you a subtle tonal shift at lower volumes but is also the first port of call to remove feedback on-stage. Our only niggle concerns the small black rotary knobs that lack contrast against the black fascia: not easy to see in low light.

Unplugged there's little to bother us. It's not the most characterful dread' we've had in our hands but it's lively, projects well with generous but not over-done lows and a rounded

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Okay, cutaway dreadnoughts aren't exactly rare in this market, but along with all that Fender mojo we have a very tidily built box with a clean solid spruce top and nicely grained solid mahogany sides. The internal X-bracing is scalloped and there are internal side supports to prevent splitting. A bone nut and compensated saddle are nice details at this price, as is the Three-colour Sunburst gloss finish off-set by the gold plastic-faced pickguard.

The Kingman's scale length is slightly below Fender's standard at 643mm (25.3 inches) but the chunky rounded profile, Gibson-like 305mm (12-inch) fingerboard radius, not to mention the bound edges and vintage-style small frets give the guitar quite an electric-like feel. This is reinforced by a relatively narrow nut width (42.7mm) and Fender-standard string-spacing at the 'Viking' bridge

voice to the high string response that's rather appealing. Maybe it's just us but the whole vibe here suggests a strummer over a picker and certainly under a vocal, or for a rockier rhythm bed, the Kingman works really well. Plugged in, again, it's a bit everyday and like so many electros at this price it needs an onboard mid-cut (and a fairly typical outboard lower mid-cut) to open out the sound. That relatively smooth high-end needs a little lift to add some sparkle but, if we're honest, that's all fairly typical.

Overall, it's a tidy, well-priced job and a great looking electro.

Dave Burruck

SUMMARY	FEATURES	★★★★★
	SOUND QUALITY	★★★★★
	VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★
	BUILD QUALITY	★★★★★
	PLAYABILITY	★★★★★
	OVERALL RATING	★★★★★

AT A GLANCE

TOP: Solid spruce
BACK & SIDES: Solid mahogany
NECK: Maple
SCALE: 643mm (25.3")
FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood, pearlloid block inlays
FRETS: 20
ELECTRICS: Fishman pickup system with Presys preamp w/ 3-band EQ, phase switch and onboard tuner
LEFT-HANDED: Not this model, but try the Feder Sonoran
FINISH: 3-color Sunburst – gloss urethane
CONTACT: Fender G&B, 01342 331700, www.fender.com

HEADSTOCK

THE Fender Strat-style headstock with its six-in-a-line tuner layout is not only very Fender, but also extremely practical to re-string and tune.

PREAMP

THIS Fishman preamp is very common at this price point, but features all you need for your open-mic slot: three-band EQ, onboard tuner and a feedback-busting phase switch.

BODY

IT'S certainly a generic dreadnought shape but the all-solid wood construction is attractive at this price point. Lots of playing won't harm its sound either!

