

FENDER PARAMOUNT PM-3 STANDARD £519

Fender doesn't just make electrics and amps; they make some rather fine, affordable electro-acoustics, too...

If you're looking for a fully featured stage-ready electro but want a guitar that'll be just as useful at home and for recording, Fender might not be on your must-try list. The Paramount series could be about to change your mind. This new Chinese-made range of three guitars, in both Standard and Deluxe levels, were created by Fender's top luthiers and feature numerous Fender details, such as 60s checkerboard rosette and purfling, a headstock shape inspired by the 70s F series acoustics, a 70s bridge design, a late 40s-style Fender logo and the 'cloud' pickguard style from Fender's Kingman acoustics.

That said, the actual body styles are quite generic, with classy

acoustic style, and feels just as comfortable played seated or strapped on. The cutaway allows easier access to the upper frets, too, which makes it a versatile guitar. Many players also like the way a 000 records.

And all that translates into a very playable guitar. The PM-3 is fairly lightly built and light in weight, and from the first strum sounds resonant and responsive. It has a 643mm scale length and a wider 45mm nut. It's a combination that makes both strumming and fingerstyle easy. Acoustically, it combines a trimmer bass response than the dreadnought with a balanced midrange and crisp modern highs that'll no doubt mellow with

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three-a-side headstocks. There's a dreadnought, parlour and, as here, a 'triple O' – the only cutaway in the trio. Along with all solid wood construction, Fender has teamed up with acoustic pickup specialists Fishman to create a new preamp system: a modern-style design with a small squashed-oval tuner display. It features three rubber-knobbed rotaries for bass, treble and volume. You engage the tuner by pressing on one side of the display, and there's a phase switch on the other side. Each preamp is apparently voiced to suit the particular body style, too.

This triple O is based on Martin's industry-standard 000 body, with a tighter waist than the larger dreadnought and is noticeably bigger than the Paramount parlour. Its 'halfway' size means that's pretty much ideal for any

playing. Plugged in, we hear good string-to-string balance, and there's quite a modern, 'enhanced' tonality – an ubiquitous piezo tone, which isn't hugely natural-sounding but certainly sits in with the majority of electros at this price and higher.

But it's the all-round nature that ticks the boxes for us: a great little home/practice/recording guitar that has pretty much all you need for live performance at a tidy price that includes a hard case. Fender's acoustics have just gotten better.

Dave Burrluck

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

AT A GLANCE

TOP: Solid Sitka spruce
BACK & SIDES: Solid Mahogany
NECK: Mahogany
SCALE: 643mm (25.3")
FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood
FRETS: 20, small
ELECTRICS: Fender/Fishman PM System w/ side-mounted volume, bass and treble controls; onboard tuner and phase switch
HARDWARE: Nickel-plated vintage-style tuners
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Gloss natural (as reviewed)
CONTACT: Fender GB
 01342 331700
www.fender.com

Total Guitar
BEST BUY

NECK

WITH its bound edges and small 'vintage' frets, it doesn't feel quite like your Strat or Tele. The neck shape is a full-shouldered 'C' – very mainstream and very playable

PREAMP

THE Fender/Fishman preamp is a proprietary design for these new guitars, with onboard tuner, phase switch plus treble and bass EQ

BODY

CLASSED as a 'triple O' body size, this is the only cutaway Paramount, and in its Standard designation features all solid wood construction: spruce and mahogany. The Deluxe version (£629) has rosewood back and sides

