

GUILD F-130CE, F-150R & D-125-12 \$850, £1,054 & £634
ACOUSTICS & ELECTRO-ACOUSTICS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY NEIL GODWIN



Guild F-130CE, F-150R & D-125-12 £850, £1,054 & £634

Guild has launched a new range of its Chinese-made GAD acoustics and electros. We try a trio... *by Jim Chapman*

Guild's GAD (Guild Acoustic Design) Series instruments were first introduced back in 2005, at a time when many big name manufacturers were diversifying production to China in the interests of price economies. Initially offering just a modest handful of designs – all based on traditional US Guilds – the range grew considerably, to the point where earlier this year there were around 30 steel-strung models plus various colour options. An implied risk of Chinese

sourcing was compromised quality control, but the range sported high build standards from the word go, and all the guitars featured solid woods throughout and came with hard cases.

This remains so today, as Guild introduces a brand new line-up that kicks off with 19 models. Some are largely

renumbered versions of previous incarnations – albeit with a few trim alterations, such as plastic instead of wood binding – and the GAD prefix has been dropped from the revised catalogue designations. Within this tally, however, sit eight entirely new instruments, and we're concentrating on three of them in this review.

The F-130CE's acoustic delivery is OM-like, with clear, precise articulation and commendably good dynamics

F-130CE

Based on the F-30, one of Guild's early instruments back in 1954, this OM-size cutaway electro has a spruce top and mahogany back and sides, cream bound with simple three-ply black/white purfling around the front, a style echoed in the pearl-inlaid soundhole rosette. With evident cross-silking on the top, timber quality looks good and, as on all three reviewees, internal vertical reinforcing strips on the rims affirm the all-solid build. The high-gloss finish is immaculately buffed and the internals are pristine and tidy.

Unlike on first-generation GADs, the full-scale mahogany neck is satin rather than gloss, but save for a separate heel portion and narrow wings making up the full width of the headstock, it's a one-piece affair. Another minor economy is that the headstock, as on all new GADs, no longer bears the 'Chesterfield' motif, a cosmetic



The cross-silking on the F-130CE's solid top speaks of its quality

The Rivals

F-130CE

Faith's all-solid spruce/rosewood **Venus Hi-Gloss** (£785) includes flame-maple binding plus a Shadow Nanoflex II pickup and SH863 preamp. **Blueridge's** similarly timbered **BR-163CE** (£969) features herringbone purfling, open-g geared tuners and Fishman Prefix Plus system. **Takamine's** **Advanced Natural** cedar/sapele **ETN70-C** (£1,042) has solid top and back, plus a CT4B preamp.



The F-150's neck depth offers a speedy, very easy-playing handful, enhanced by the immaculately dressed fretting

marker Guild also dropped when it introduced the US-made Standard Series last year. Topped by open-g geared Waverly-style tuners and usefully having a second strap button at the heel, the neck is semi-wide, commencing at 44.5mm across the nut and offering a generous, fingerstyle-friendly 56mm-plus bridge string spacing. The grip feels comfortably snug and slick thanks to the shallow, flat-back 'C' profile and low-ish action, and fretting along the unbound rosewood fingerboard is very well dressed. The only minor irritation is sharp nut corners, but these are easily rectified with a few strokes of a file.

Like other GAD electros, power comes from Fishman's Sonitone undersaddle pickup with active endpin preamp and soundhole volume and tone controls. The 9V battery is housed in a velcro'd pouch on the face of the neck block.

Sounds

The acoustic delivery is OM-like, with clear, precise articulation, an open-toned, sustainful blend of warmth and brightness, and commendably good dynamics for the body size. Fired up, the Sonitone is a very able performer. Gain is enthusiastic, cross-string output balance is spot-on, and the voicing pleasingly natural.



The F-150R is inspired by the US-made Traditional Series F-50R

There's plenty of travel on the tone wheel, but the difference between min and max is fairly subtle, although it's sufficient to add a nice sparkling edge from a neutrally toned starting point.

F-150R

Although this spruce/rosewood jumbo is inspired by Guild's

long-running Traditional Series F-50R, it doesn't share the latter's 438mm (17.25-inch) super-jumbo body span. Instead, measurement across the lower bouts is a more modest 422mm (16.6-inches), though allied to capacious 119mm-deep rims it's still a sizeable instrument. Binding is similar to the F-130CE's, but to this is added a wood-mosaic centre line down the back, while the rosewood fingerboard, with its model-appropriate rectangular pearl block markers, is also cream-bound. Other 'deluxe' elements include a sculpted rear-bridge profile as on the original F-50s, and gold die-cast tuners that look the part though a few have some slack in their gearing.

The F-150's satin neck is constructionally similar to the F-130's, but with general playing rather than picking the stated aim here, the width is a regular 43mm at the nut, with bridge string spacing tightened to 53mm. The depth is again shallow, offering a speedy, very easy-playing handful that is

The Rivals

F-150R

Vintage's spruce/maple **V1700N** (£629) super jumbo includes gold tuners and decorative neck markers.

Yamaha's spruce/rosewood **LJ16H** (£766) small jumbo has pre-aged top and includes ebony fingerboard and bridge. **Tanglewood's** spruce/mahogany

MasterDesign TSM3 (£1439) offers a discreet electro alternative, sporting a non-invasive B-Band A1 system. All the guitars are all-solid woods.



A wood-mosaic centre line sets the F-150 apart from the F-130



Guitarist
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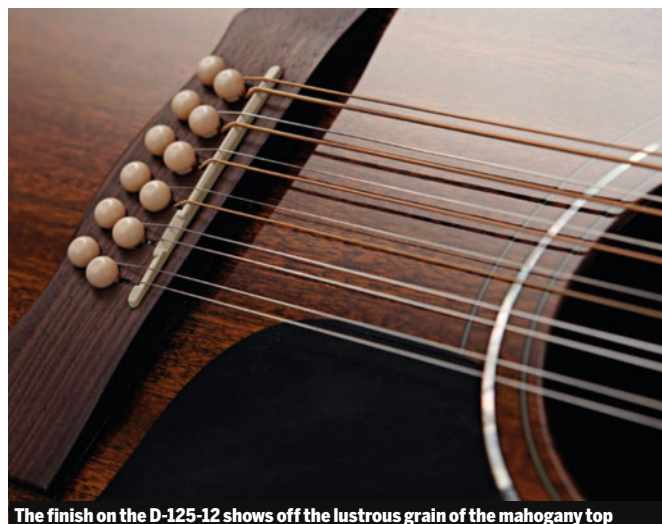
once more enhanced by the immaculately dressed fretting and a low, buzz-free action.

Sounds

The F-150 slightly flatters to deceive. It has the requisite low-end thump you'd expect from a decent jumbo, but outright volume and projection from the player's standpoint aren't exceptional given the generously proportioned soundbox. That said, it's by no means a shrinking violet; rather it gives the impression of needing a good dose of vigorous playing-in in order to unlock more richness and dynamic verve from the guitar.

D-125-12

This 12-string harks back to Guild's all-time most popular dreadnought, the D-25, launched in 1968 and over the years made either as an all-mahogany instrument, as here, or with a spruce top. Like early examples, this GAD interpretation has a flat (solid) back, though the company changed this during the seventies to a laminated arched one, ostensibly for sound



The finish on the D-125-12 shows off the lustrous grain of the mahogany top

benefits though just as likely for reasons of cost.

With the body's lustrous finish showing off the mahogany's graining to handsome effect, the guitar – due not least to the extended array of mini die-cast tuners – is fairly heavy, tipping the scales at 2.6kg. It's also slightly neck-heavy – not uncommon on 12s – though not enough to be troublesome. One constructional detail it shares

Often 12-string necks can be torture, but the D-125-12's is configured to be as player-friendly as possible

with the jumbo is reinforcement around the underside of the soundhole, which gives the impression of a double-thickness top. Such a measure hasn't been deemed necessary on the OM. A minor departure from the other two in neck construction is that, instead of having a single main length, the headstock is scarfed on. Possibly it was felt that such a jointing would be less prone to breakage, given the length of, and stress on, the peghead.

Often 12-string necks can be torture but this one is configured to be as player-friendly as possible. The 47.5mm nut span is par for the genre; the profile is a bit fuller to help counter the extra string pull, but is still comfortably

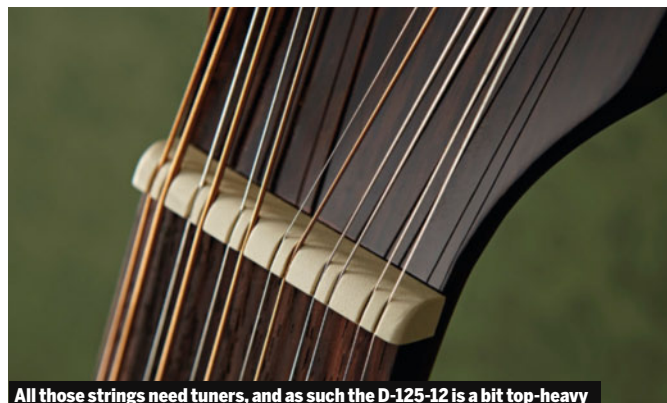
The Rivals

D-125-12

Seagull's solid cedar/wild-cherry **Coastline Cedar 12** (£555) includes maple neck and semi-gloss polish finish.

Tanglewood's satin-lacquered **TW15/12** (£599) is all-solid spruce/mahogany, with a one-piece neck.

Yamaha's all-solid spruce/rosewood **LL16-12** (£778) has a gloss body and ebony fingerboard and bridge. The seagull and Yamaha both come with a gigbag.



All those strings need tuners, and as such the D-125-12 is a bit top-heavy

shallow; and well considered spacing between the double courses enables pretty accurate picking. The factory has worked wonders with the set-up and action – 1.6mm treble, 1.9mm bass at the octave – which are both as slinky as you'll find anywhere and only occasionally a tad clanky. Intonation stays reassuringly sure footed as you progress up the 'board, something that definitely can't be taken for granted on 12s.

Sounds

Welcome to the world of joyous jangle. Yes, this Guild thrums and sparkles like a good 'un, such that you just want to keep strumming the thing. It arguably could score even

higher on the satisfaction index with a tad more infusing warmth via the low end, but frankly that's being dead picky because it's such an enjoyably sonorous instrument to get stuck into as it stands.

Verdict

As we have seen, there are detail aspects on these three new GADs, compared with the previous series, that reflect Guild's keeping a beady eye on production costs: loss of the Chesterfield motif, satin rather than gloss necks, and plastic not wood bindings. However, none of these ought to be a deal-breaker because essential quality remains tip-top. The F-130CE is a very capable OM picker with a simple yet effective pickup system; the F-150R jumbo's from-new sound slightly disappoints but it's otherwise a class instrument with maturing potential; the D-125-12 is, simply, a wow, not just for being a great, easy-playing 12-string but for its extremely keen price. If the rest of the series musters similar merits, continued success for the GADs is a cert. **G**

The Bottom Line

Guild F-130CE

We like: Fingerstyle appeal; buoyant unplugged and powered sounds

We dislike: Sharp nut corners, but nothing else

Guitarist says: Desirable mid-size all-rounder electro sure to attract many takers

Guild F-150R

We like: Lovely neck; upmarket trim touches

We dislike: Slightly shy sound for a biggish jumbo

Guitarist says: Has the potential to be another fine Guild jumbo

Guild D-125-12

We like: Great looks; lovely neck; sound

We dislike: Mite neck-heavy

Guitarist says: Delightful, janglesome 12 that's bang on the money



Guild F-130CE

PRICE: £850 (inc case)
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: OM-style cutaway electro-acoustic
TOP: Solid spruce
BACK/SIDES: Solid mahogany
MAX RIM DEPTH: 104mm
MAX BODY WIDTH: 392mm
NECK: Mahogany
SCALE LENGTH: 650mm
TUNERS: Nickel, open-geared
NUT/WIDTH: GraphTech NuBone/44.5mm
FINGERBOARD: Unbound rosewood with 406mm radius
FRETS: 20, thin
BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood with NuBone saddle/56.5mm
ELECTRICS: Fishman Sonitone undersaddle pickup; active endpin preamp with soundhole volume and tone
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 1.95/4.3
OPTIONS: Non-cut acoustic F-130 (£658). Also rosewood-backed F-130R (£754) and F-130RCE (£958)
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Gloss natural body, satin neck
Fender GBI
01342 331700
www.guildguitars.com



Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Guild F-150R

PRICE: £1,054 (inc case)
TYPE: Jumbo acoustic
ORIGIN: China
TOP: Solid spruce
BACK/SIDES: Solid rosewood
MAX RIM DEPTH: 119mm
MAX BODY WIDTH: 422mm
NECK: Mahogany
SCALE LENGTH: 650mm
TUNERS: Gold, die-cast
NUT/WIDTH: NuBone/43mm
FINGERBOARD: Cream-bound rosewood with 406mm radius
FRETS: 20, thin
BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood with NuBone saddle/53mm
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.45/5.4
OPTIONS: F-150RCE with Sonitone system (£1,258). Also 12-string F-1512 (£1,210) and F-1512E (£1,354), both spruce/rosewood and non-cutaway
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Gloss natural body, satin neck

Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★☆
Value for money	★★★★☆

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★



Guild D-125-12

PRICE: £634 (inc case)
TYPE: 12-string dreadnought acoustic
ORIGIN: China
TOP: Solid mahogany
BACK/SIDES: Solid mahogany
MAX RIM DEPTH: 122mm
MAX BODY WIDTH: 400mm
NECK: Mahogany
SCALE LENGTH: 650mm
TUNERS: Chrome, mini die-cast
NUT/WIDTH: NuBone/47.5mm
FINGERBOARD: Unbound rosewood with 406mm radius
FRETS: 20, thin
BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood with NuBone saddle/60mm
WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.59/5.7
OPTIONS: Six-string D-125 (£526)
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Gloss natural body, satin neck



Test results

Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

GUITARIST RATING ★★★★★