

FIRST PLAY



FENDER KINGMAN ASCE
£549

.....
WHAT IS IT? Vintage-inspired
cutaway dreadnought electro



**FENDER ROOSEVELT
RESONATOR CE**
£549

.....
WHAT IS IT? 14-fret, cutaway
electro resonator with dual
pickup system





Diverse Duo

Fender's slowly expanding acoustic line is becoming big news in store. We find out why

Words Dave Burrluck **Photography** Olly Curtis

Not too long back, Fender had acquired – or inherited – quite a collection of acoustic brands under its worldwide distribution arm. There was Guild and Ovation (USA and import), Takamine, a smattering of Gretsch acoustics, and a growing number of affordable Fender-brand acoustics coming from China and Indonesia. We even saw some Fender USA models, too. Cut to the present day, however, and it's a very different Fender. Having shed those other acoustic brands (Gretsch excepted), Fender is focusing on its own acoustic brand, albeit with no current signs of any USA acoustic production.

This new duo sums up the current Fender acoustic world: a mix of original-style Fender flat-top designs alongside more everyday fare. So, the Kingman harks back to the first wave of Fender acoustics from 1963, not least with its big Strat headstock, although here the neck is glued-in, not bolted. The Roosevelt Resonator has no place in Fender's past and aside from the Telecaster headstock and 'f' holes (Fender holes, geddit?), it seems like a bit of blanket rebranding. And yet both are highly affordable: the Kingman is made in China and comes with a tidy hard case; the Roosevelt is manufactured



in Indonesia, but you'll have to buy your own bag for this one.

As well as that, both models are Fishman-powered electros, too. The Kingman has its simple under-saddle and side-mounted Presys preamp – with volume, bass, mid and treble rotary controls, and push buttons to engage the onboard tuner and change the phase. The Roosevelt goes for a magnetic/piezo hybrid setup with a Telecaster-style magnetic neck pickup and Fishman pickup on the resonator cone, with volume and tone for the former and just volume for the piezo. The two sources are balanced by a Fishman Powerchip active preamp. The output is mixed-mono only on a side-mounted plate that also holds its necessary battery.

The lightweight Kingman is all solid wood, spruce and mahogany, which again ups its value-for-money rating. It's gloss finished,

The Kingman will find plenty of friends: it's outgoing, projects well and is lively, too

too – clearly quite thinly on the rippled, wide grained front and straight-grained back. Both are two-piece, centre-joined. Despite the Fender motifs – such as that gold plastic-faced pickguard and wide 'Viking' bridge – construction of the cutaway dreadnought body is pretty universal with scalloped X braced top and a clean interior. The much heavier, smaller bodied Roosevelt is made entirely from laminates, spec'd with a flamed maple-faced top, though through the mainly opaque black there's virtually no flame visible. The back and sides are laminate mahogany here, with a wide-heeled mahogany neck.

Scale lengths differ between the two models on test, too. The Kingman goes for 643mm (25.3 inches), while the Roosevelt is shorter at the Gibson standard of 629mm (24.75 inches). Both have tidily bound rosewood 'boards: the Kingman's with a 305mm (12-inch) radius; the Roosevelt with a more acoustic-like 406mm (16-inch) curvature. We get a bone nut and compensated saddle on the Kingman, and the same nut features on the Roosevelt, but the bridge, which sits on top of the Dobro-like aluminium spider, is a two-piece design of maple pieces topped with thin rosewood strips. Tuners on both are like old-style Klusons, and the Roosevelts have rather

1. That logo, that headstock shape. It can't be anything else but a Fender. Its original acoustics featured a bolt-on neck, unlike here
2. Bound fingerboard and block inlays bring a late 60s/early 70s vibe to the Kingman
3. No bolts here. Instead we have a very typically acoustic heel with ivoroid heel cap. Note the strap button, with reinforcing inside block, on the shoulder, too
4. The ubiquitous Fishman preamp is pretty well spec'd with accurate tuner, three-band EQ and phase control. Not the easiest to see on dimly lit stages, though...



attractive aged white plastic buttons, which tie in with the clean double body binding.

Feel & Sounds

Both necks have quite a rounded and quite deep C section with pretty electric-like string spacing at both the nut and saddle. Acoustically, the Kingman will find plenty of friends: it's outgoing, projects well and covers a wide response from pretty big basses through to bright but not overdone highs. It's lively, too, with an upper-mid push and nice dynamic, but there's seemingly also a compression roof when you dig in. The completely different physics of the resonator produce an entirely different sound: honkier, more nasal with a relatively short, rather banjo-like sustain.

Both models have similar setups with the same 0.012-gauge strings, so the resonator really isn't aiming for serious slide. It's easy enough, but in drop tunings (not least with its shorter scale), we'd be upping the string gauge to increase tension, and likely the action, too.

Plugged in, the Kingman sounds a little vanilla, needing some mid reduction both onboard and outboard to open the sound. It's not overly zingy, so you may want to lift that area a little (which is easily done on the well-centred EQ controls on the preamp), although



5

watch the bass end, because it can run away with you. And, yes, you can fingerpick, but we spent most of our test time with a plectrum in hand – it just seems to suit the guitar.

Plugged into our stage rig, the Roosevelt immediately gives us a wall of feedback. The cone's pickup is, err, very lively. It also needs a completely different signal path that actually keeps the EQ more linear. In fact, a little mid boost helps both magnetic and piezo sounds, and it helps getting an authentic electric slide sound. On its own, that cone sound is very tinny – a huge contrast to the almost soft-edged neck single coil. The tone control is simply a treble roll off (which would have been more help on the piezo side), but add a little of the piezo to the magnetic and you have a pretty usable pseudo-'acoustic' resonator voice. Of course, it's only a mono output, but switch the signal path into some rootsy distortion for that

Add a little piezo to the magnetic and you have a pretty usable pseudo-'acoustic' resonator voice

5. The Roosevelt's controls are volume and tone for the neck pickup and just volume for the resonator cone's pickup

6. Aside from those F-for-Fender soundholes, this Tele headstock is the only Fender DNA here...

7. ...well, apart from the Tele-style neck single coil, of course, which when mixed with the much brighter cone pickup creates a pretty good hybrid sound





6



7

neck pickup and you've got quite a stage buddy. Just take care with the piezo pickup.

Verdict

Many may find it a surprise that, in terms of units, Fender is frequently in the top three acoustic brands sold all over the world. While it does have a smattering of vintage-inspired models such as this Kingman on its books, it's also a surprise that its other acoustics (such as the Roosevelt electro-resonator) appear much less Fender, much more generic. Nevertheless, we all know the power of the big name on the headstock and with perfectly competent guitar making – and at these prices – there's little to complain about here aside from, perhaps, character: the Kingman has it in elegant sufficiency; the Roosevelt, while still a pretty valid instrument, has very little. **G**



FENDER KINGMAN ASCE

PRICE: £549 (inc case)

ORIGIN: China

TYPE: 14-fret dread' cutaway electro

TOP: Solid spruce with scalloped

X bracing

BACK/SIDES: Solid mahogany

MAX RIM DEPTH: 124mm tapering

to 99mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 396mm (15.6")

NECK: Maple

SCALE LENGTH: 643mm (25.3")

TUNERS: Nickel-plated vintage-style

tuners with aged white plastic buttons

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/42.7mm

FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood, pearloid block inlays, 305mm (12") radius

FRETS: 20, small

BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood with

compensated bone saddle/55mm

ELECTRICS: Fishman pickup system

with Presys side-mounted preamp,

3-band EQ and onboard tuner

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2/4.4

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The Sonoran SCE

is £270; left-handed at £280. The

Villager 12-string is £340

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: All gloss urethane 3-Color

Sunburst (as reviewed)

Fender GBI

01342 331700

www.fender.com

8/10

PROS Lively sounding, affordable cutaway dread that has character aplenty with good sounds to match

CONS Its quite electric-like playability won't suit every player; definitely more of a strummer



FENDER ROOSEVELT RESONATOR CE

PRICE: £549

ORIGIN: Indonesia

TYPE: 14-fret cutaway electro

resonator

TOP: Laminate figured maple

BACK/SIDES: Laminate mahogany

MAX RIM DEPTH: 96mm

MAX BODY WIDTH: 371mm (14.6")

NECK: Mahogany

SCALE LENGTH: 629mm (24.75")

TUNERS: Nickel-plated vintage-style

tuners with aged white plastic buttons

NUT/WIDTH: Bone/42.9mm

FINGERBOARD: Bound rosewood,

white pearloid snowflake inlays,

406mm (16") radius

FRETS: 20, small

BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood-

tipped-maple 'spider' bridge/55mm

ELECTRICS: Fishman piezo pickup for

resonator, Tele single coil (neck);

volume and tone (magnetic), volume

(piezo), with Fishman Powerchip

mixing preamp

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 2.96/6.5

OPTIONS: None

RANGE OPTIONS: The other

resonators in the Fender line are

the Brown Derby (£280) and the

metal-bodied FR-55 Hawaiian (£659)

– both are acoustic-only

LEFT-HANDERS: No

FINISH: All gloss urethane Moonlight

Burst (as reviewed)

6/10

PROS A perfectly good stab at this style of guitar – a grab, go and gig electro-resonator

CONS More thought in the electrics department would make a difference. A bit of character might help, too...