

YAMAHA AC1R £648

Bang for the buck? Yamaha points a bazooka at your wallet with the new A series

IT looks like Yamaha is on a bit of a roll. Back in issue 228 the new Pacifica 611HFM made a bold statement about what the Japanese giant thinks a mid-priced electric should be, and now it looks as though the A series could do the same for the company's line of acoustic offerings.

The A series is split into two levels: the all-solid A3 models (also sporting upgraded electronics), and the A1 models, which include a solid Sitka spruce top, laminate back and sides (available in either mahogany or rosewood), and a less sophisticated preamp. Each model is then available in either dreadnought or the smaller

“Plugged in, the sounds continue to impress”

concert body format, and comes with a sturdy Hiscox hard case as standard. The AC1R we have here is a concert-style A1 acoustic with rosewood back and sides.

If there's one word that comes to mind after spending a bit of time with this guitar, it's 'balance'. There's an almost Zen-like sense of purpose and sophistication, and it starts with just how well the AC1R is designed and made. The body itself boasts luxurious mahogany binding and a classy gloss finish, while the mahogany neck has been treated to a semi-open finish, mixing the tactile response of an open-grain neck with the smoothness of a satin finish. Think clean, minimal, and elegant. Balanced, in fact.

Of course, good looks count for nought without great tone, and thankfully the AC1R impresses yet again on that count. In our

recording feature in issue 228 we advised picking a smaller-bodied guitar for recording, and the AC1R is a perfect example of just why that is. Whereas dreadnoughts and jumbos can be a tad overpowering, the AC1R's concert body has a tighter bass response that's more about clarity than thundering low-end. It combines beautifully with the zingy, bell-like ring of the higher strings to give excellent note separation that works just as well with strumming as it does with fingerpicking.

Plugged in, the AC1R's sounds continue to impress, with none of the dreaded piezo 'quack' rearing its ugly head. The tones are powered by Yamaha's ART undersaddle pickup partnered with a proprietary 'System 66' preamp. The EQ provides plenty of tone tailoring, and there's a surprising amount of gain on tap. As with the purely acoustic tone, there's excellent string balance and note separation to be had too, making for a very impressive performance for a mid-priced acoustic. Annoyingly, the tuner doesn't mute the output of the guitar though. Although you can just turn down the volume, this can be an inconvenience when you're playing in a live setting.

This is the second five-star review for Yamaha in the past few months – no mean feat. The versatile tones and clever design of the AC1R make it a jack-of-all-trades, and actually, a master of most of them. With a street price closer to £550 and the included case, it's clear that this is one of the most competitive mid-priced acoustics on the market today.

Alun Lower

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



AT A GLANCE
BODY: Solid sitka spruce top, laminated rosewood back and sides
NECK: Mahogany
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
SCALE: 25 1/2"
ELECTRONICS: Yamaha System 66 preamp with SRT undersaddle pickup
HARDWARE: Chrome
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Natural (shown), vintage sunburst
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1 FINGERBOARD

THE rosewood fingerboard features a set of very tidy fret markers and rolled edges for increased comfort around the neck area

2 PICKGUARD

THIS striking, faux-tortoiseshell pickguard is based on the kind found on Yamaha's mid-70s N1000 acoustics. It looks bold in pictures but actually blends in very nicely

3 PICKUP

YAMAHA'S SRT undersaddle pickup features individual elements under each string, which give you excellent clarity and note separation for live performances and studio work