



Words: Henry Yates

**VS**

**FENDER CF-140S**  
**VS TANGLEWOOD**  
**TW28 CSN**

Beggars have more choice than they realise, and here's a pair of stellar strummers to get you started



**ROCK** 'n' roll doesn't discriminate. From the angular axemen of alt-rock to the portly porch potatoes of the blues, our guitar heroes come in all shapes and sizes. Appropriately, so do the tools of their trade. While the demands of bracing and resonance mean that acoustic guitars will never look as wildly disparate as, say, a Stratocaster and a Razorback, if you're only aware of the time-honoured (but kinda tedious) spruce-meets-mahogany dreadnought then you're stuck on the tip of the iceberg.

Obviously, if you want a parlour model fashioned from gum-tree and mermaid shinbone you'll pay through the nose, but even at a rock bottom price

point the fledgling strummer of 2012 has an eclectic choice of body shapes and timbers. Admittedly, we haven't gone for anything too crazy in our choice of contenders, because ultimately everybody wants a practical and playable model as opposed to a conversation piece. Still, we hope that with Fender's CF-140S (£178) offering a pinched-waist hourglass folk/OOO style body, and Tanglewood's TW28 CSN (£229) throwing a curveball at the dreadnought body blueprint with its solid cedar top, this dual might stop you from following the herd.

Two top-flight luthiers, two ferociously competitive price tags. But this gigbag ain't big enough for the both of them.





**FENDER**  
**CF-140S** **£178**

Small but perfectly formed strummer from the big 'F'

**WHAT** the folk is going on here? In a market sector that groans beneath a glut of bloaters and behemoths, the Fender CF-140S is slim, sultry and almost a little stunted, like Kylie Minogue driving a Smart Car. In terms of cubic centimetres of fresh air, it's virtually a shoebox with a 104mm rim depth to the laminated mahogany body, a solid spruce top circa 370 mm at the widest point, and a corset-waisted hourglass figure that we desperately want on our lap. The laws of physics dictate that smaller acoustics often don't have much poke, but the Fender boys are confident citing "full, rich and resonant" projection that will "fill a room".

Inside and out, the X-braced Chinese build is tidy and there's nothing to delay you getting to grips with a body and neck that are a breeze compared to your average dread. The body doesn't swamp you, the neck feels slim in the palm, and the scale is just a little shorter. String spacing is pretty standard – it's actually

**"The tone is damn good for £178, with a great spruce snap"**

the same as the Tanglewood – meaning you have plenty of room for uncluttered fingerpicking combined with a great sense of physical control. Fret access is no better than normal, but all in all this feels like the kind of go-anywhere guitar that you grab for a busking session (an impression

backed up by the price). The CF-140S certainly has a bit of welly for its size, but compared to the big boys it doesn't ring out with as much authority and, relatively speaking, TG found ourselves working hard once we opened our gob to sing. As for the tone, it's damn good for £178, with a great spruce snap that gives definition with fingers and a

rousing jangle with a pick. As for that "fill a room" soundbite? We're not so sure. It's certainly punchy and insistent, but the tone leans towards the twang and falls down a little on warmth and fullness.

The folk-size body has seen a resurgence in popularity over the past couple of years, finding favour with the bearded fraternity, and scoring a Fender acoustic for less than £200 is an exciting prospect. The CF-140S is a great example of the format, doing Leo proud with its tight handling and punchy voice. It's certainly a breath of fresh air, but with that said, we're still holding out for a hero.

**AT A GLANCE**

**BODY:** Solid spruce top  
laminated mahogany body  
**NECK:** Mahogany  
**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood  
with dot inlays  
**FRETS:** 20  
**SCALE:** 25 1/3"  
**HARDWARE:** Chrome  
**LEFT-HANDED:** No  
**FINISH:** Natural Gloss  
(pictured)  
**CONTACT:** Fender GBI 01342  
331700 www.fender.com

<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>FEATURES</b>				
	<b>SOUND QUALITY</b>				
	<b>VALUE FOR MONEY</b>				
	<b>BUILD QUALITY</b>				
	<b>PLAYABILITY</b>				
<b>OVERALL RATING</b>	★★★★★				



Fingerpickers will love Fender's folksy format...

# TANGLEWOOD

## TW28 CSN £229

It's all over once this fat baby sings

**YEAH** we know. In the *Bible*

David takes out Goliath. But this is real life, and the

Tanglewood TW28 gets busy throwing its not-so-insignificant weight around from the start.

In the dreadnought tradition, it's huge in every direction with the soundboard clocking 400mm, the rim depth circa

120mm, the round shoulder

contours blotting out the sun, and the smaller body of the Fender covering in its wake. That's not to say this is a brutish instrument. To this reviewer, cedar is not only a tonal curveball, it also looks more sultry than spruce, and Tanglewood has made a tidy job of lashing the satin finished solid top to the laminate body, topped off with a soundhole rosette that's among the classiest we've seen. It's a shame, then, that the end of the fingerboard is a bit mangled. Structurally, though, it's sound.

**“The overall tone will knock you off your seat when you dig in”**

To state the bleeding obvious, the Tanglewood does feel like a whopper on the lap and after the wafer-thin CF-140S neck profile, this longer scale mahogany item feels pretty chunky. Potentially, this alone might smoke out smaller players and we'd wave them on to the Fender without hesitation, but for anyone who can handle the girth, this acoustic guitar is ultimately more rewarding.

Really, it all boils down to tone. As you'd hope from a dreadnought, the TW28 can belt it out in terms of raw volume, but it really starts pulling ahead when you analyse the more subtle qualities of the sound. Spruce is great, but you hear that distinctive snap everywhere. To us, this solid cedar top is a far more arresting proposition that brings a real richness and response to light fingerpicking, and teams up with the mahogany for a

gorgeously warm overall tone will knock you off your seat when you dig in with a plectrum. It just has a little more character than the Fender, and ultimately that's what we set out to find.

It seems a tad adolescent to conclude that 'big is best', but in this case there's no getting around it. Like keeping an elephant for a pet, the Tanglewood is kind of cumbersome and inconvenient, but once you hear this fat baby sing you'll make space for it in your life.

### AT A GLANCE

**BODY:** Solid cedar top with laminated mahogany body

**NECK:** Mahogany

**FINGERBOARD:** Rosewood

with dot inlays

**FRETS:** 20

**SCALE:** 25 1/2"

**HARDWARE:** Chrome

**LEFT-HANDED:** Yes (£249)

**FINISH:** Natural Satin

(pictured)

**CONTACT:** Tanglewood Guitar

Company 01937 841122

[www.tanglewoodguitars.co.uk](http://www.tanglewoodguitars.co.uk)

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

★★★★★

...but the Tanglewood model brings the noise