

GUILD F-30, D-55 & F-512 £1,966, £2,470 & £2,422
ACOUSTICS



Guild Quality

Three iconic Guild guitars, reborn for modern times and ready to be your lifelong partner. But how different do they sound and feel?

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Guild F-30, D-55 & F-512

£1,966, £2,470 & £2,422

What We Want To Know

1 So, how do I understand the Guild line?

Well, prices are a good indicator. More affordable GAD and Arcos models are made in the Far East, while the Standard Series (including our F-30) and Traditional Series (including the D-55 and F-512) are USA-made, as is the vintage-inspired Orpheum Series, plus special and artist models

2 The most revered acoustic 12-string ever?

It just might be: introduced in 1968, the F-512 was originally a custom-order guitar (as was the D-55), but it's sound and beauty made it a popular choice. Today it's an all-time classic

3 So who's played a Guild acoustic?

Who hasn't? Clapton, Richie Havens, Slash, Pete Townshend, John Denver, SRV, Brian May, Nick Drake, Johnny Cash, Paul Simon, John Renbourn... The list is long and illustrious

Guild is undoubtedly the 'other' classic American acoustic brand. Sat on proud foundations that date back to New York in 1952, it nonetheless had a somewhat rockier ride through the latter 20th and early 21st centuries than either of its principal rivals Martin and Gibson. During this period Guild has had to undergo major changes of ownership and strategy, not to mention

moves between numerous production facilities.

Guitar giant Fender acquired Guild in 1995, and has certainly taken its time re-establishing the model line and brand. Initially built in Corona, California, then moved to the old Tacoma factory in Washington State, Guild has eventually found its new home somewhat closer to its original roots in New Hartford,

Connecticut. Instruments started rolling off the line in 2009, increasing in number and variation ever since.

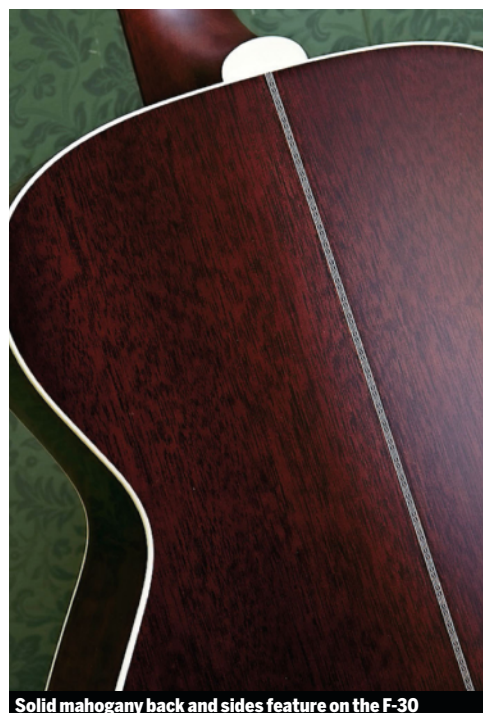
These three all hail proudly from New Hartford and for all intents and purposes are the 'classic' Guild models. The D-55 dreadnought and F-512 12-string Jumbo come from the premium Traditional Series, while the F-30 is from the slightly lower priced, although still American-made, Standard Series. It's been quite the journey, so let's see how our journeymen have fared.

Sizing up

The most obvious differences between these guitars – one



The satin-lacquered mahogany neck on the F-30



Solid mahogany back and sides feature on the F-30



being a 12-string model notwithstanding – are their body shapes and sizes. The F-30 is the smallest, Guild's take on the curvier, thinner, orchestra-style instrument beloved of all manner of folkies and fingerstylists for a tone you'll often hear described as anything from "balanced" or "vocal", through to "focused". Underlining that are the solid mahogany back and sides; mahogany can often have a cleaner, clearer attack and more defined string separation when compared with a similar guitar that uses rosewood for its back and sides.

Next up, the D-55 is Guild's dreadnought, very similar in shape to the all-conquering 14-fret Martin on which it's based, loved the world over as the true acoustic all-rounder – characterised by deeper bass, less accentuated mids and

slightly more sparkling trebles than a smaller-bodied guitar, all other things being equal. It makes them more pleasing strummers in general, but they also get finger- and flatpicked very successfully, too.

The D-55 has solid rosewood back and sides that, in theory, should bring some richness, depth and lower-midrange overtones when compared with a mahogany body alternative.

Finally, the Jumbo – also solid rosewood back and sides – is obviously the biggest of the bunch, an inch and a half wider than the dreadnought, albeit marginally less deep from front to back, and aping the curvier, F body type with the more

The D-55 is Guild's dreadnought, very similar in shape to the all-conquering 14-fret Martin on which it's based

pinched waist. This extra roominess – again, all things being equal – deepens bass further, which tends to knock the mids back a touch in what you perceive, sonically. A 12-string isn't usually a first choice for fingerpicking for obvious reasons, so you're more likely to hear them strummed or picking out plectrum melodies and chord arpeggios: it's a familiar sound that's distinctive, evocative and unmistakable.

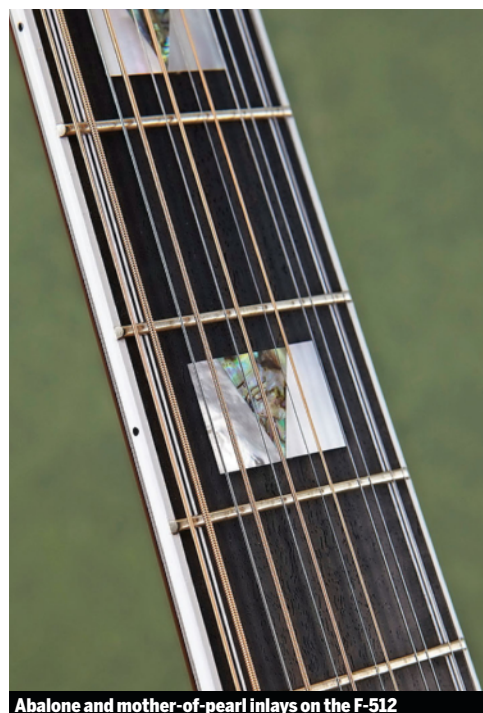
All three guitars have solid Sitka spruce tops supported by scalloped red (Adirondack) spruce bracing. Red spruce is lighter and stiffer than the Sitka variety, so makes a lot of sense for bracing a top that needs to be light, strong and resonant. Some people like red spruce for the entire soundboard too, especially those with a hard pick attack, or players requiring maximum headroom and clarity. It can take a little bit of

The Rivals

For a different take on the 'folk' guitar in this price range, we really like the all-mahogany **Taylor 522** (£1,815). For a flashy dreadnought, the **Martin D-41** (£3,676) is king of the hill; the **D-35** is less ostentatious (and less expensive, too). High-end, non-cutaway jumbo 12-strings are thin on the ground – none of Gibson, Martin or Taylor makes one, which kind of proves that the F-512 really does stand alone



The D-55 dread has great definition and dynamic range



Abalone and mother-of-pearl inlays on the F-512



work to get the most from such a top, however, which is perhaps one reason that Guild has opted for the (usually) slightly more forgiving Sitka on these three guitars.

The other differences are at first glance cosmetic, further setting the Standard and Traditional Series instruments apart. The Traditionals have more ornate binding, ebony headplates, more abalone and mother-of-pearl inlays and gold hardware. Their more 'upmarket' billing also brings ebony fingerboards and bridges, which feel and sound different from the rosewood that's used on the more plain-Jane F-30.

We must just mention the high-quality faux-alligator skin cases that come with the Traditional Series guitars, too. It might sound cheesy when you describe it, but boy do they make you feel great walking into a gig: super-classy and very cool indeed. The F-30 gets a plainer affair, visually – though it's the same, high-quality TKL case.

Sounds

There's something just so fundamentally right about the F-30. Absolutely no-nonsense from start to finish, it has an appointments list that puts function over form at every turn, for example the beautifully cut and finished bone nut and saddle, but a lack of excessive decoration.

The single-piece mahogany neck is finished in a fast-feeling satin lacquer that, coupled with the slightly wider nut, feels all at

once modern yet traditional. There's enough meat in the palm and relief in the neck to appeal to fingerstylists who like to dig in, where you're rewarded with that punching tone that offers great string separation and projecting, but still with enough warmth to strum a chord or five, too.

The 648mm (25.5-inch) scale might mean that string tension is tough for those used to shorter-scale 'folk' guitars (such as Martin 000s), especially when strung with 0.013s, but it's a big part of why the guitar projects and sings as well as it does. Also, it's worth saying that it's a real bonus for drop- and low tunings where things can get a bit floppy and indistinct on a shorter-scale guitar.

Perhaps not as instantly satisfying (read 'bassy') as the D-55 or F-512, it really comes into its own in a band, a recorded mix, or when accompanying voices.

The D-55 dreadnought makes for quite the contrast: a gloss neck, and slimmer nut accentuating the neck's overall thinness; more a D than a C profile, to invite comfortable first-position chords, aided by an impressively low action. Fingerstylists who like to dig in will find it all too cramped and easy, but there are plenty of other people out there who just want an acoustic that's blissfully easy and comfortable to strum: this is it.

The D-55 makes a good flatpicker, too, with more midrange attack than we were

There's something so fundamentally right about the F-30: it's absolutely no-nonsense, from start to finish

expecting. Perhaps that Adirondack bracing is doing its job, because string separation, definition and dynamic range are all notable. It feels loud, alive and resonant when playing soft or hard, which are things you might say more commonly about a lightly built mahogany dread, though that rosewood warmth and depth is certainly

there. Aggressive strummers will need to put a little more relief in the neck in order to get those strings really moving, and let the thing sing out.

The F-512, though, is obviously a whole different boiling pan of *poisson*. You need to spend some time getting over the novelty of having a 12-string if you don't play one regularly



The fit and finish on all three guitars is truly exemplary

because, frankly, even the cheaper specimens sound pretty cool and different when they're first strummed.

This, however... oh lordy. You just revel in the sheer depth of the bass and the impressive punch with which notes and chords throw forwards. It's such a sonorous instrument, one of those guitars that even gets non-guitar-players excited by the noise it's making: very close to genuine magic. Go on, just try *not* playing Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* for literally hours on end – an indulgence for sure.

Verdict

It's a genuine pleasure to hear, see and feel Guild at the top of its game. If these three are anything to go by, the latest Traditional and Standard models are absolutely up there with the other big American names, offering superb quality craftsmanship and world-class tone. Any criticisms we could level are purely subjective in terms of aesthetic or personal tonal biases: and besides, we're genuinely struggling to think of any.

Handmade in the USA, they're certainly not impulse purchases; to wit, we'd say that the F-512 is either a totally frivolous, got-to-have-the-best choice for the guitar player who has everything or, conversely, the realisation of the 12-string dream for anyone deadly serious about playing them professionally. Either way, it's melted every heart at *Guitarist* Towers.

The D-55 and F-30 are potentially more serious workhorses that have every likelihood of outlasting and outperforming any one of us as long as we can keep on picking: the dreadnought as a sumptuous strummer and flatpicker, the F-30 as the no-nonsense, yet thoroughly pro fingerstyle instrument. These are three must-try guitars that absolutely nail each of their respective genre's most desirable qualities at a professional standard. Hooray for New Hartford. 🎸



Guild F-30

PRICE: £1,966 (inc case)
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Orchestra-sized acoustic
TOP: Solid Sitka spruce
BACK/SIDES: Solid mahogany
MAX RIM DEPTH: 109mm (4.3")
MAX BODY WIDTH: 381mm (15")
NECK: Mahogany
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
TUNERS: Gotoh die-cast – chrome
NUT/WIDTH: Bone, 44.45mm
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood with pearl dot inlay, 305mm (12") radius
FRETS: 20, medium
BRIDGE/SPACING: Rosewood/55mm
ELECTRICS: Optional (none fitted on review model)
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 1.95/4.3
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes
FINISH: Gloss nitrocellulose (body) satin lacquer (neck)
Fender GBI
01342 331700
www.guildguitars.com

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

Guitarist says: A superb, pro-grade picker that trades visual niceties for the most important tonal features and build. Needs a pickup as standard, though



Guild D-55

PRICE: £2,470 (inc case)
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: Dreadnought acoustic
TOP: Solid 'AAA' spruce
BACK/SIDES: Solid rosewood
MAX RIM DEPTH: 125mm (4.9")
MAX BODY WIDTH: 404mm (15.9")
NECK: Three-piece mahogany/walnut/mahogany
SCALE LENGTH: 650.8mm (25.625")
TUNERS: Gotoh open-back – gold-plated
NUT/WIDTH: Bone, 42.9mm
FINGERBOARD: Ebony with mother of pearl and abalone inlays, 305mm (12") radius
FRETS: 20, medium
BRIDGE/SPACING: Bone, 55mm
ELECTRICS: Optional (none fitted on review model)
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 2.3/5.1
OPTIONS: Antique Burst finish, and D-Tar Multi-Source pickup system
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, Natural and Antique Burst
FINISH: Natural gloss nitrocellulose (body), gloss lacquer (neck)

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

Guitarist says: A loud, proud and classy dread offering serious credibility, quality and tone. Just make sure you bond with the flattish neck profile



Guild F-512

PRICE: £2,422 (inc case)
ORIGIN: USA
TYPE: 12-string jumbo acoustic
TOP: Solid Sitka spruce
BACK/SIDES: Solid rosewood
MAX RIM DEPTH: 120mm (4.72")
MAX BODY WIDTH: 437mm (17.2")
NECK: Three-piece mahogany/walnut/mahogany
SCALE LENGTH: 650.8mm (25.625")
TUNERS: Gotoh open-back – gold-plated
NUT/WIDTH: Bone, 46mm
FINGERBOARD: Ebony with mother of pearl and abalone inlays, 305mm (12") radius
FRETS: 20, medium
BRIDGE/SPACING: Bone, 64mm
ELECTRICS: None Optional (none fitted on review model)
WEIGHT (KG/LB): 2.6/5.8
OPTIONS: Antique Burst finish, and D-Tar Multi-Source pickup system
LEFT-HANDERS: Yes, Natural and Antique Burst
FINISH: Natural gloss nitrocellulose (body), gloss lacquer (neck)

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

Guitarist says: The dream 12-string: either the realisation of a dream, or a serious pro-grade working guitar (as long as you buy the one with a pickup!)