

GEAR

REVIEW

GUILD 'ARCHBACK'



GUILD WESTERLY COLLECTION 'ARCHBACK' JUMBO JUNIOR £365

Hot on the heels of Guild's affordable Archback electros we get to grips with a mini version

THE Guild company has finally got its USA factory up and running this year and part of the new acoustic range are the 'Archbacks' – guitars that use a pressed arched back that does away with the need for back braces, just like the firm did back in the day. The Jumbo Junior takes this concept and brings it to the trendy travel guitar concept.

The Jumbo Junior down-sizes Guild's classic jumbo and creates a very similar outline to Taylor's popular GS-Mini. The good news for us skint troubadours is that unlike the £600-ish Mexican-made GS-Mini electro, the Jumbo Junior, which is made in China and comes with a pretty sturdy gigbag, costs

In comparison to our GS-Mini, however, it lacks some low-end depth with a slightly thinner midrange. Re-stringing the Junior with Taylor-like Elixir Nanoweb 80/20 Bronze 0.012 to 0.053 strings sweetens its voice a little – they're not cheap strings but worth the outlay, as they create a perfectly credible, new-sounding and strident acoustic sound.

Plugged in, the AP-1 pickup system seems to over-compensate for the bass-light acoustic voice and some reduction benefits the overall balance. We had problems with the string-to-string balance of the previous Archbacks we reviewed, but here it's ship-shape and even. Like the acoustic sounds,

It doesn't feel that down-sized when you start strumming

nearly 50 per cent less. We're liking this lil' chap already.

It's certainly a close cousin to the GS-Mini, slightly less deep, with a scale length that's a quarter-of-an-inch longer, and while the headstock apes the classic Guild raised dome style you could easily mistake one for the other.

But it's a tidily built guitar with a clean Sitka spruce top, slightly scalloped bracing, cream edge binding, simple soundhole rings and a tortie-like scratchplate. Its arched back and sides are laminated mahogany (there's a maple version at the same price) and it's all finished in a satin sheen.

But it doesn't feel that down-sized when you start strumming. The nut width is 43mm (and has regular string spread of 36mm) and bridge spacing is a roomy 55mm (wider than Yamaha's FS, for example). The neck has a slightly 'V'd profile and generous depth – all good. It's a nice player.

it's a little brash-sounding but good enough for an open-mic slot and, with some additional outboard EQ and compression, begins to punch above its price.

Guitars such as the GS-Mini and Martin's Dreadnought Jr might have more obvious appeal but they come at a higher price. There are plenty of other 'minis' out there too, not least from Faith and Vintage, which are more affordable, but this Jumbo Junior remains a perfectly good guitar. It's an ideal take-anywhere electro or simply a kick-about house guitar, ideal for the songwriting and recording musician. One to try.

Dave Burrluck

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

AT A GLANCE

TOP: Solid Sitka spruce
BACK & SIDES: Laminated mahogany
NECK: Mahogany
SCALE LENGTH: 603mm (23.75")
FINGERBOARD: Rosewood
FRETS: 19
ELECTRICS: Guild AP-1 w/ soundhole volume and bass controls
HARDWARE: Rosewood bridge w/ compensated bone saddle, vintage-style open-gear tuners
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Natural
CONTACT: Selectron UK, 01795 419460, guildguitars.com

NECK

THIS mini jumbo has a reduced scale length of 603mm (23.75"), although it's tuned to standard pitch. Aside from being a compact traveller it makes for a great overclub guitar

ELECTRO CONTROLS

THE Guild AP-1 active under-saddle and preamp system uses soundhole-placed volume and bass controls – the latter reduces the bass response

BODY

THE body is 368mm (14.5") across its lower bouts with a max depth of 105mm (4.13"). That's very close to Taylor's GS-Mini: 365mm (14.4") in width with a max depth of 112.7mm (4.44")

