

**YAMAHA FJX730SC & FGX730SC BOTH £582**  
ELECTRO-ACOUSTICS



PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIP SOWELS



## Yamaha FJX730SC & FGX730SC both £582

The ART of noise? Yamaha installs its contact-sensor system on two tasty new acoustics *by Jim Chapman*

In 2006, Yamaha used a revamp of the APX and CPX series as the occasion to introduce its new ART contact-pickup system. Since then the system, in various formats, has been rolled out to other models, firstly on the CPX15 Mark IIs then, last year, on the revised Handcrafted electros. Until now, electro variants of the long-running FG dreadnoughts had relied exclusively on under-saddle piezo-strip systems, but the new FGX730SC sees ART being added to that range too, employing the same one-way system as used on the APX and CPX 700. Not only that, but this newcomer has been joined by the similarly loaded mini-jumbo FJX730SC – an entirely new model whose cutaway body is closely modelled on the Handcrafted LJXs.

### FJX730SC

At a distance it could be easy to confuse this FJX with its LJX counterparts, not least because its identically profiled body shares the same dimensions of 400mm (15.75-inches) across the lower bouts and a generous 125mm maximum rim depth. However, aside from various detailed specification differences, the FJX's main identifier is the chevron-topped

FG-style headstock as opposed to the Handcrafted's crowned design. Another visual pointer, depending on what the shops are stocking at the time, is that the latter only comes in natural, whereas the FJX is available in black and brown sunburst also.

Construction marries a solid Sitka spruce top with laminated rosewood back and sides, edged with cream binding that is also used for the heel capping and along the rosewood fingerboard and around the peghead. Other tasteful trim includes an abalone rosette and micro-dot position markers, while the finish is Yamaha's oft-used combination of gloss body and satin neck. This is all immaculately presented, as is every other aspect of the instrument's build and detailing, the only omission being no second strap button at the heel. The FGX doesn't have one either.

The medium-width neck, of three-piece scarf-jointed nato, is fashioned to a moderate depth, with a rounded 'C' profile that lends a vaguely traditional grip but without any bulk penalty. The gently cambered 'board allows a fast, slick action, and the only arguable crib is that the thin frets, though very well dressed, are quite square-sided in

section, making for slightly steppy runs up and down. In typical Yamaha fashion, string spacing at the bridge is on the tight side, but ignore the actual dimension and just play, and you'll find fingerstyle falls

### The Rivals

#### FJX730SC

**Takamine's** solid spruce/nato **EG540SSC** mini-jumbo (£449) carries the tuner-loaded, three-band TK-40 preamp. **Aria's** small-jumbo **SP Standard** (£579) is solid spruce/mahogany with an arched back, powered by a Fishman Classic 4 system.

**Crafter's** spruce/nato **AGE100MH** (£379), also with swell back, has a three-band preamp with mid-scoop and tuner. All are cutaway.



The FJX's preamp controls include three-band EQ and a broad-range mid sweep





Fired up, one of the joys of ART is its absolutely even output across the strings, unlike the random imbalances that can afflict pressure-sensitive under-saddle systems

pretty naturally under the hand. Existing Yamaha acoustic users will feel instantly at home anyway.

Although a one-way system – i.e. having a single output to the preamp – the ART set-up comprises dual sensors mounted side by side on the underside of the bridge plate. The rim-mounted preamp, with separate battery holder up on the shoulder, includes three-band EQ plus a broad-range mid sweep from 80Hz to 10kHz. There's also an onboard auto-chromatic tuner, which proves fast and reliable.

### Sounds

Though perhaps not as outright loud as its deep body would

suggest, the FJX is no acoustic slouch. The bottom-end is rich and creamy yet openly defined with a nice front-end snap when digging in, while pervading the whole tone is that typical Yammy sweet-edged sparkle and long, fluid sustain. Fired up, one of the joys of ART is its absolutely even output across the strings, unlike the random imbalances that can afflict pressure-sensitive under-saddle systems. The preamp's EQ also offers a generous range of tonal expression, though this does need to be called upon because ART does seem to have a hint of inherent upper-mid/treble nasally hardness, as this reviewer found when reviewing the non-EQ'able Handcrafteds last year. Happily the EQ successfully tackles this – thanks mainly to the ultra-wide mid sweep – making the guitar a generally impressive powered performer.

### FGX730SC

Save for the fact that this is a dread not a mini-jumbo, the FGX730SC is identical to the FJX in all aspects of materials, cosmetics, finish and ART system, and the presentation is just as handsomely executed. Compared to the FJX's full-depth rims, those of the FGX come in at a slightly shallower 118mm, a measurement that has long applied to FGs. The



Tasteful cosmetics include the inlaid abalone rosette and tortie scratchplate

lower-bout span of 412mm (16.25in) is somewhat wider than Martin's dreadnought template, for example.

One interesting variance between the two guitars is the FGX's neck. It's the same in width and string spacing but the profile is slightly shallower, with less wood along the shoulders, resulting in a slinkier, marginally snugger

grip. This may be preferred by smaller-handed players, though if it turned out that other FGX samples had a more FJX-like profile, or vice versa, it certainly wouldn't be a deal-breaker either way. Both necks are highly playable and comfortable.

### Sounds

Given both instruments' >

### The Rivals

#### FGX730SC

**Takamine's** spruce/sapele **EG530SSC** (£499) has a solid top and back and abalone rosette; powering is a TK-40 preamp. **Garrison's** solid cedar/rosewood **AGD-700CE** (£519), with abalone markers and rosette, carries a four-band Artec system with notching and mid-tune. Finally **Tanglewood's** **TW15NSC-B** (£619) is all-solid spruce/mahogany, powered by a tuner-equipped B-Band A3T system



Chrome kidney-button tuners feature on the chevron-topped headstock

The FJX resembles its Handcrafted superiors but without the high price tag, allied to which is a richly toned performance. The FGX, meanwhile, fully earns its spurs as a flagship

capacious bodies and spruce/rosewood spec, their sounds, unsurprisingly, are not dissimilar. The FGX, however, does have slightly more resilient dynamics and is a tad more airily toned overall, albeit sacrificing a little of the other instrument's low-end richness in the process, though not at the expense of balance, which is excellent. Previous observations about the ART system largely apply here, though it's interesting to note that, thanks perhaps to the guitar's subtly more mid-scooped acoustic character, it is less prone to nasality creeping in. In fact very little EQ'ing either side of flat is required to deliver rewarding sounds, which allows the controls to be used a little bit more creatively.

### Verdict

Both guitars deserve to be winners. The FJX resembles its handcrafted superiors but without the high price tag, allied to which is a richly toned performance. Also take into account that, Takamines excepted, cutaway mini-jumbo electros are thin on the ground at this price level. The FGX, meanwhile, fully earns its spurs as the new flagship of Yamaha's Chinese-made FGs,

and is an excellent all-rounder with sounds to match. Best of all, and despite any minor personal reservations about the ART system's intrinsic tonality, both typify what's best about the company's flat-tops: they're dead reliable. Toyotas of the acoustic guitar world, you might say, which is no bad thing at all. **G**

### Bottom Line

#### Yamaha FJX730SC

**We like:** Classy build and handling; warmth-infused acoustic tones  
**We dislike:** ART system can sound a mite nasal without EQ'ing  
**Guitarist says:** A new value-led body style that's bound to attract new Yamaha buyers

#### Yamaha FGX730SC

**We like:** Build and playing quality again; strong open-toned performance  
**We dislike:** Ditto FJX, though less so  
**Guitarist says:** Proof-positive that Yamaha's FG dreads will continue undiminished



### Yamaha FJX730SC

**PRICE:** £582  
**ORIGIN:** China  
**TYPE:** Cutaway mini-jumbo electro-acoustic  
**TOP:** Solid Sitka spruce  
**BACK/SIDES:** Laminated rosewood  
**MAX RIM DEPTH:** 125mm  
**MAX BODY WIDTH:** 400mm  
**NECK:** Nato  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 650mm  
**TUNERS:** Chrome diecast  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Plastic/43mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Cream-bound rosewood with 406mm radius  
**FRETS:** 20, thin  
**BRIDGE/SPACING:** Rosewood with plastic saddle/53mm  
**ELECTRICS:** ART under-bridge sensors; System 56 preamp with volume, bass, middle, mid sweep, treble, tuner on/off, LCD read-out; separate quick-release battery holder  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.07/5  
**OPTIONS:** Solid spruce/nato FJX720SC (£582) with under-saddle piezo and tuner-equipped System 55T preamp  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** No  
**FINISH:** Gloss natural body, satin neck (brown sunburst and black also available)  
**Yamaha Music UK**  
**01908 366700**  
**www.yamaha-europe.com**

### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★



### Yamaha FGX730SC

**PRICE:** £582  
**TYPE:** Cutaway dreadnought electro-acoustic  
**ORIGIN:** China  
**TOP:** Solid sitka spruce  
**BACK/SIDES:** Laminated rosewood  
**MAX RIM DEPTH:** 118mm  
**MAX BODY WIDTH:** 412mm  
**NECK:** Nato  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 650mm  
**TUNERS:** Chrome diecast  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Plastic/43mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Cream-bound rosewood with 406mm radius  
**FRETS:** 20, thin  
**BRIDGE/SPACING:** Rosewood with plastic saddle/53mm  
**ELECTRICS:** ART under-bridge sensors; System 56 preamp with volume, bass, middle, mid sweep, treble, tuner on/off, LCD read-out; separate quick-release battery holder  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.07/5  
**OPTIONS:** Solid spruce/nato FGX720SCA (£470) with under-saddle piezo and tuner-equipped System 55T preamp  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** No  
**FINISH:** Gloss natural body, satin neck (brown sunburst and black also available)

### Test results

**Build quality** ★★★★★  
**Playability** ★★★★★  
**Sound** ★★★★★  
**Value for money** ★★★★★

**GUITARIST RATING** ★★★★★