

# TANGLEWOOD

## TSB Series



Two interesting takes on a classic theme from Tanglewood... **Words:** Tim Slater

**Tanglewood is** probably best known for its large range of acoustic and electro acoustic guitars but it might come as a surprise to see that the company also includes several smart looking electric guitars and basses in its

catalogue. This review focuses on the TSB series, which takes its cue from the universally popular single cutaway LP shape and this review focuses on two significant models from the line: the vintage-style TSB58 and its stable-mate, the exotic looking TSB 'C 58' model, which features a handful of extra cosmetic touches and costs around £70 more.

### Bodies, necks & hardware...

There is a powerful heritage – no pun intended – associated with the LP shape and over the decades this

classic design has left its jazz origins far behind, becoming indelibly associated with swaggering bad ass blues rock. This is good! The main reason that this style of electric guitar is such an unqualified success as a rock and roll weapon is purely down to a series of lucky historical coincidences that culminated in a kind of musical Big Bang when electric guitarists began to investigate what would happen when you took a solid chunk of mahogany, some magnets and wires and shoved the whole lot through a smoldering tube amplifier. Turn that volume knob

thingy on the amplifier up to 'ten' and amazing things can happen – it's a beautiful noise and belongs with sex and eating as something that human beings were put on this earth to enjoy! Oh yes...

Both of these Tanglewood guitars share identical solid mahogany bodies and set (glued-in) necks, features that purists value as an important source of the mythic single cutaway tones. To be fair neither Tanglewood feels particularly like a genuine vintage Les Paul, the Tanglewood necks feel significantly less clubby, which is something that a lot of

### TANGLEWOOD TSB Series

TSB 58 £329.95  
TSB C 58 £399.95

All prices include VAT

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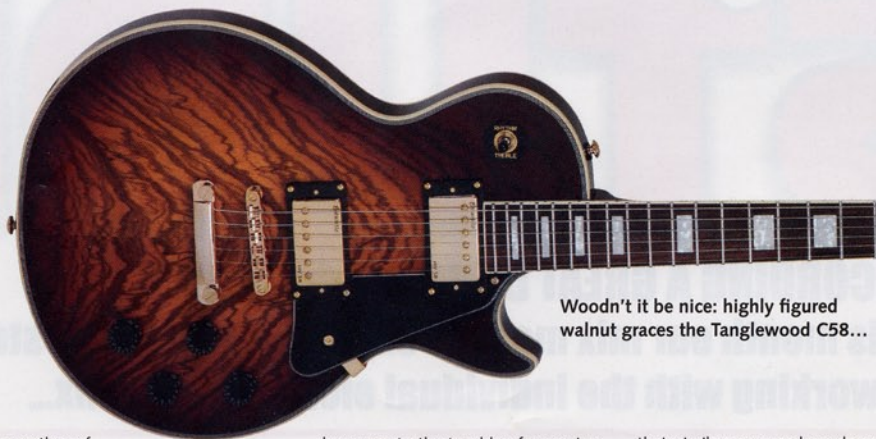
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If there is a blanket word to describe the HV 58 pickups' performance, 'smooth' would probably do nicely...

guitarists might actually prefer. The slim necks are complemented by comfy rosewood fingerboards with a traditional 12-inch radius and hefty jumbo frets; two factors that encourage 'bendy' players to really dig in and give the strings a good workout in the time honoured blues rock style without fear of the notes choking off. The exemplary setup on both guitars deserves a nod too, the frets are polished to perfection and the frets have been expertly prepared so that both guitars feel really professional and fun to play... no doubt both guitars might have benefitted from a bit of extra attention due to being up for review but if Tanglewood can maintain this standard on the guitars that go to the stores then they will win many new fans and deservedly so.

**Honey talks...**

The TSB58 features a lovely honey burst finish that is complimented by traditional crème edge binding around the flame maple top, which is a veneer but no less attractive for it.



Woodn't it be nice: highly figured walnut graces the Tanglewood C58...

weather of but still a factor that separates both guitars. The C 58's striking looking top is made from a heavily figured walnut laminate (charmingly called 'crotch' walnut due to its origin in a cross-section where two limbs meet on a tree) and the tobacco sunburst finish does a great job of highlighting the dramatic tiger stripe grain pattern. This, together with the gold

has gone to the trouble of engaging the services of a genuine pickup designer when it would doubtless have been much easier to lob in some generic Pacific Rim humbuckers and have done with it. According to Alan Entwistle, the HV 58 humbuckers employed here sport vintage style alnico V magnets and are wound to deliver a tones that are comparable to a vintage PAF. The HV58s are also 'scatterwound',

their similar specs and as a long time LP player it was interesting to enjoy the C 58's rosewood fingerboard's warm tone and forgiving feel, whereas a real Les Paul Custom's ebony 'board feels neither forgiving nor sounds anything like as transparent. Of course, it would be silly to suggest that either these sub-£500 axes will quite deliver the same level of sumptuousness as a real Gibbo but where they both succeed

# Over the decades this classic design has left its jazz origins far behind, becoming indelibly associated with swaggering bad ass blues rock. This is good!

By contrast the C 58 takes its stylistic cue from the Les Paul Custom and duly features double binding around the top and the mahogany back. The double binding adds more of a pronounced corner to the neck heel; you can really feel the tip of the heel when sliding up to the top of the neck whereas the 'standard' 58 model's neck heel feels noticeably softer; not something to make heavy

hardware make the Ltd edition 58 model a really classy looking guitar. The honey burst TSB 58's nickel hardware and vintage style tuning machines are more or less in step with the specs you'd look for on a vintage style single cutaway guitar and – unlike chrome or gold plate – nickel develops a genuine patina of age once it's been played-in for a while, which will only help to improve the guitar's looks over time.

Both guitars' share the same type of traditional tune-o-matic style fixed bridge and tailpiece, plus two covered humbuckers linked to a standard three-way pickup selector switch located on the upper bout. The Tanglewoods' headstocks show a commendable attempt by Tanglewood to avoid directly ripping of the original LP headstock shape, their slightly tapered profile looks sleek and racey without alienating purists.

**Tanglewood Tones...**

The twin humbuckers on both guitars are far eastern-made vintage spec'd HV 58 models designed by British pickup designer Alan Entwistle. It's pleasing and somewhat reassuring to find that Tanglewood

which alludes to the method of guiding the plain enamel wire onto the pickup bobbins by hand. Instead of being wound uniformly onto the bobbins via an automated winding machine, the hand-to-eye process introduces a slightly random element to the winding configuration that is reputed to add to the humbucker's distinctive vintage character; that and the right type of alnico magnets and plain enamel wire, of course. However nebulous the idea of a genuine 'vintage' humbucking tone might be, due to the wide discrepancy between the original 50's PAFs, there is no denying that both Tanglewood TSBs deliver tones with the power to make the listener and the player sit up and take notice. If there is a blanket word to describe the HV 58s' performance, 'smooth' would probably do nicely. Both guitars punch well above their weight – and price tags. From the moment that you first fire them up you find yourself playing...and playing...and playing a bit more until you suddenly notice that the hands on the clock have traveled quite some distance since you started. Both guitar's share a more or less identical sonic signature thanks to

is by virtue of great build quality, a lovely finish and tones that are absolutely spot-on in terms of plummy warmth and an appropriately aggressive bark when needed. **PM**

**WHAT ARE THEY?**

A solid body single cutaway electric, based on a worldwide favourite.

**WHY SHOULD I WANT ONE?**

Both Tanglewood's feature an excellent standard of fit & finish and big, authentic blues tones. Without being direct 'copies' in the literal sense, both guitars reviewed here offer a way to enjoy the unique ballsy tone and classic vibe of a single cutaway LP style guitar without straining the purse strings.



The tapered headstock adds an elegant touch