

TANGLEWOOD

TVC Koa S



Tanglewood continue to raise the quality bar with this stunning new mid-priced electro acoustic...

Words: Tim Slater

Time was that when you went out to buy a mid-priced acoustic guitar, even a fairly good one, there was very little discernable difference between one brand and the next. However, the new Tanglewood TVC Koa S contains plenty of subtle touches that help it to stand out among the throng of acceptable but often unremarkable instruments jostling for your attention in the more wallet-friendly corner of your local guitar emporium.

Tanglewood guitars have always enjoyed a good reputation among gigging musicians and the more casual player alike; great finishing and flamboyant decorative inlay work helped its lower-priced instruments to project a flashy stage-ready panache but lately Tanglewood seems to be adopting a more serious approach. The new Tanglewood TVC Koa S is a smart looking electro acoustic guitar from the brand's new Evolution Exotic series, which currently comprises three cutaway auditorium size guitars. All three models sport

highly figured laminated Koa back and sides with a choice of laminated koa or solid Spruce or Cedar tops. Our review guitar is the spruce-top version and for a sub-£500 instrument it certainly demonstrates how serious Tanglewood is when it comes to raising the quality bar at this competitive price range without compromising its all-important cash-conscious niche.

Construction and features

Looking at the pictures you'd be forgiving for assuming that the TVC Koa slots neatly into position alongside other compact electro-acoustic guitars featuring a single cutaway but this Tanglewood is still to all intents and purposes a full-sized auditorium-sized instrument. This isn't to suggest that the TVC Koa is particularly hefty or unwieldy; it just feels generously proportioned. Measuring 110mm deep and 400mm wide across the lower bout the TVC Koa S is constructed along traditional lines, with regular X bracing supporting the solid Cedar top. The standard of internal and external finish is very high indeed; the internal kerfing is tidy with no traces of glue or loose ties, whilst the external trimmings including the binding and fret-work also demonstrate a very high degree of attention to detail. The gloss finish also serves this guitar well, helping to enhance the subtle flame effect found on the highly figured Koa back and sides. The rather plain Spruce top is possibly the only giveaway that we are looking at a mid-price guitar, the grain is fairly bland but to be fair it is still offset by a very neat abalone

soundhole rosette whose understated appearance stands in stark contrast to some of the defiantly flamboyant designs we've seen from Tanglewood in the recent past.

Sounds

Acoustically the TVC Koa displays an evenly spaced tone that sounds rich and well balanced. Excellent projection is matched by a warm, even bass and a treble register that sounds bright and clear. With no trace of the raw, almost metallic edginess that can mar the top end range of many mid-priced guitars it's very hard to find fault with the TVC Koa but if we had to criticize anything it might be said that some might find this mellow tone a bit bland. Personally speaking, if I was looking for a good electro acoustic guitar for live work I'd be sorely tempted to opt for this smooth sounding and impeccably well-mannered guitar than some of the arguably more dynamic but less predictable counterparts out there. The onboard Fishman Presys preamp

mounted on the upper bout is the entry-level model that features a basic three-band EQ, master volume and a phase switch that helps to cancel out phase problems onstage; for example when the guitar's built-in pickup is used in conjunction with an external microphone. The onboard digital tuner readout is bright and big enough to see clearly on a darkened stage. Amplified, the Fishman preamp replicates the guitar's natural acoustic poise and balance perfectly, with the added bonus that the player is now free to tweak the tone to match their playing environment, no two rooms being acoustically alike! Fishman's good reputation notwithstanding the Presys/TVC Koa amplified tone sounds amazingly good for a relatively low-cost combination; there is plenty of power and enough range in the EQ to help maintain a consistent performance regardless of the type and size of venue, with no discernable traces of the thin 'plasticky' tone and brittle treble you still occasionally encounter among lower priced guitars. **PM**

TANGLEWOOD TVC Koa S

SRP £499.00

TVC Koa £469.00

All prices include VAT

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SHOULD I BUY ONE?

This new Tanglewood represents one of the nicest sounding and best playing affordable acoustic guitars that we've seen in quite a while. Around five hundred quid is still quite a lot of money to pay for a guitar but weighing up how good this guitar plays and sounds, in this instance the price feels about right.

Besides a beautifully measured tone, you find a superb slim neck and a low action that electric players should be able to switch to with little adjustment plus rock solid tuning stability. As we said, some may interpret it's good manners and even temperament as being a bit unexciting but no one could deny that this is a superb guitar that justifies it's still reasonable price.