

KIND

GOBLUE



The first time I looked at this Blueridge BG-40, I thought it reminded me of a Gibson J160, the guitar the Beatles used on many of their early hits. Certainly, the tasteful brown sunburst and the slightly slope-shouldered jumbo body evoke that model but as I looked more closely, I realised that the Blueridge is no mere copy. The BG-40 goes in its own direction when it comes to the shape of the headstock, fingerboard inlays, shape of the scratch plate and other details. It's a nice blend of the familiar and the original.

Picking up the guitar is a pleasant surprise as it is quite light. I always find that an encouraging

sign because it suggests a certain amount of skill went into the construction. If you want to make sure an acoustic guitar stays in one piece however approximate the workmanship, the easiest thing to do is make all the body parts twice as thick as they need to be. This is not the route to good tone...

Another thing that is essential to good tone is fine quality woods. If you've ever played a guitar made from laminate next to a model made from solid timbers, I'm sure you know what I mean. The neck, back and sides on the Blueridge are mahogany and the top is solid Sitka spruce. It's a classic combination for an acoustic guitar. ▶

ROADTEST

You should be careful about how you judge the tone of any acoustic guitar because the way it sounds from the playing position and the way it sounds to the audience is usually quite different. It's all down to the laws of physics and the fact that an acoustic guitar is designed to project sound forwards from the hole in the top.

"It's a real

I was strumming this guitar quite heavily when my other half came into the room. "How would you describe the sound?" I asked. "Rounded and well balanced!" she replied. Thanks to my occupation, Hazel has listened to a lot of acoustic guitars over the years and I respect her opinion to the extent that it has been the deal-breaker in whether I buy a guitar or send it back.

Oddly enough, our own Nick Bryant had played the same BG-40 and pronounced it a bit bright and topky. I also respect his opinion – he's an experienced player who knows a quality guitar when he comes across it.

But it's my *Roadtest*. (Mine, you hear!? Mine!). So who do I agree

with? Both, as it happens. From the playing position, this guitar is a little bright but if you hold down a chord and keep strumming as you turn the guitar top towards you, you'll discover all that bassy warmth comes to the fore.

You can exploit this characteristic when recording: simply move the mic off-axis to get more cut, or more directly in front of the guitar to bring out more

player, this guitar."

warmth. I discovered that the BG-40 records very nicely and naturally cuts through the mix.

It's a real player, this guitar. The neck is extremely comfortable and I think a lot of electric guitar players will take to it straight away. But it's still an acoustic and it lends itself well to fingerpicking, as well as strummed open chords. In this respect, it's more of an all-rounder than some of the dreadnought jumbos we've reviewed, which are stronger on big chords than the more defined sound that suits fingerpicking. **PM**

The Blueridge BG-40 is strong on vintage vibe but how does this acoustic perform when you pick it up and give it some?

Words: Simon Croft

► Outside

I took a long look at the wood used in the making of this guitar and I can't fault it. Although there is a sunburst applied around the top, the rest of the instrument is natural, so you can see exactly what's on offer. Whoever polished this guitar to such a fine gloss, did so with dedication. The finish is close to flawless, even on the top edge of the headstock, which sometimes gets overlooked.

While we're on the subject of the headstock, I'm sure you've noticed the inlay work. It's all as tidily done as the pictures would suggest and the 'ivoroid' buttons on the vintage-style machine heads set it off a treat. It's a little bit of luxury you wouldn't expect on an instrument of this price. In case you're disappointed that this guitar doesn't sport sealed Grover tuners like many guitars in this price range, I'd like to point out that many top-name guitars have come with open-backed tuners over the years. They are not necessarily inferior and have the advantage of being a little bit lighter. This helps the balance of the guitar and – some believe – the tone as well.

Even the nut is worthy of mention. Like the bridge saddle, it's bone. Not only is it a more durable and tonesome material than the usual moulded plastic, it means that someone has had to cut the slots in the nut and carve the offsets in the bridge saddle that add so much to the way this instrument stays in tune even high up the neck.

This means more time in the set-

up process because if the slots for the strings are too high, the guitar will be hard to play but if they're too low, the strings will rattle.

Full marks should also go to the way the ends of the frets have been finished, with not a trace of rough edges under your hand. Again, this takes time, which has to be reflected in the asking price.

If I was going to be hyper-picky, there was the slightest trace of polishing compound against the ninth fret (removal time with edge of thumbnail 30 seconds) and I'd be tempted to give the tops of the frets a polish with some Brasso cloth the first time I changed the strings, just to get that really slick, bendy feel. (I know some pro guitarists who do this every time they change strings anyway. Apart from keeping the frets really slick, it helps to get finger crud off the board).

While we're still on this part of the guitar, the fingerboard is rosewood – as is the bridge – and the 'diamond snowflake inlay are immaculately fitted, as well as being a tasteful restatement of the motif in the centre of the head. Talking of tasteful, the three-play binding on the front and back of the body, plus around the sound hole are nicely understated. I think the guitar looks all the better for it.

Inside

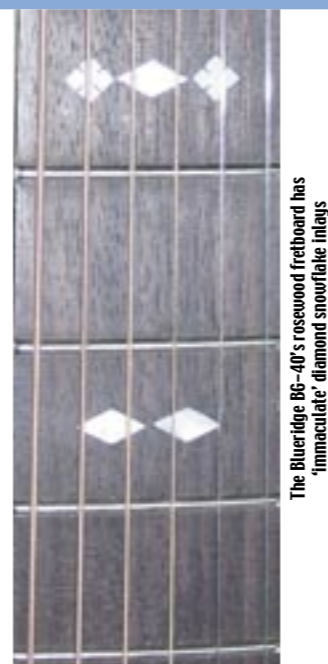
What happens inside the body of an acoustic guitar makes a massive difference to the way it sounds. Taking a sneaky peek inside the sound hole and wrapping my fingers round a few braces, I was

impressed by what I discovered.

In the years since Playmusic launched, I've become used to the idea that even modestly priced acoustics can have clean and well-constructed bracing systems. What I wasn't expecting was the level of sophistication on offer here.

You see, the inexpensive way to shape the struts is to simply round the outer edge off a bit so they have a 'U' profile. A more expensive route is to carefully plane them, so that they end in a 'V' shape. This takes more work but should result in maximum structural stability for minimum mass.

The bottom line is that the more freely the top can vibrate without exploding under the pressure of the strings, the more projection and tone you should get – especially if you factor in a well-proven body shape and high grade materials. That's essentially what the Blueridge BG-40 offers. **PM**



The Blueridge BG-40's rosewood fretboard has immaculate diamond snowflake inlays



BLUERIDGE BG-40

WHAT IS IT?

A Very nicely made and attractive six-string, steel-strung acoustic guitar of classic design and proportions. If you're looking for a good place to start, this is it.

WHY SHOULD I WANT ONE?

Everyone should own a decent

acoustic guitar and this Blueridge should give you years of playing pleasure for an affordable price. Learn a few chords, entertain yourself, your friends and loved ones, write a monster hit, become a virtuoso... it's up to you what you do with it but this guitar is up to all of the above and more.

SRP: £299
01273 491333

WWW.SAGAMUSIC.COM