



**£249**

# BLUERIDGE BR-40D ACOUSTIC

**HOT DANG – A FOLK GUITAR THAT ROCKS!** WORDS: STEPHEN LAWSON

**> You're taking the piss... Folk music doesn't rock!**

You've never been to a Dropkick Murphys show then. And you obviously haven't heard of The Pogues either. Shane McGowan's band of raggedy-arsed drunkards gave folk a kick in the balls during the 1980s, mixing old-time influences with punk attitude. Even those crumbly Irish cardigan-wearers The Dubliners were reputed to spend the whole day drinking in the pub before recording note-perfect renditions of *The Irish Rover* in the studio at night. So forget Foster & Allen – folk can rock just as hard as, er, rock...

**But what makes this acoustic a folk guitar then?**

The new BR-40D from Blueridge features the classic dreadnought body style – square shoulders, spruce top – developed by Martin Guitars way back in 1916. The dreadnought's body was larger than the parlour guitars of the day, giving it more volume and projection when picked or strummed – ideal for use in large groups where smaller guitars would have been drowned out. It would become *the* guitar for bluegrass and folk players, and so it has remained ever since.

**Ok, but why should I give a folk about dreadnought guitars?**

Strummers love that big, full chordal sound produced by the dreadnought's body. Flatpickers dig the solid response they get when they pluck their dreadies good and hard. Fingerpickers may prefer the intimate sound of a parlour guitar, but for most first-time acoustic guitar players the dreadnought is a versatile and reliable beast. Everybody should have one...

The Blueridge is a bit special though. With its mother-of-pearl headstock inlay (the fancy Dan bit at the end of the neck) and

high-gloss finish, the BR-40D is a real treat.

**It sure is pretty... How does it look up close and personal?**

Just as good. In all areas where different pieces of wood come together to form the body, we found it smooth and well-finished. Those waverley-style tuners add some old-time finesse and, as we mentioned before, the mother-of-pearl headstock inlay gives the Blueridge a desirability factor usually associated with instruments at twice the price. Inside the body there's a sure sign of a keen attention to detail: it's so clean, not a drop of spilled glue to be seen – cleaner than Rik Waller's dinner plate in fact.

**And that's important is it?**

Oh yeah... Blueridge is justifiably proud of this guitar's internal x-style bracing system. Basically the slim wooden struts inside the body hold the guitar together and support the top helping it to sustain – as well as enhancing resonance. Again x-bracing was developed by those Martin chaps and it worked so well that it's become the standard for dreadnought guitars ever since. Of course the proof of this design is in the playing, and listening – but more on that later. We had a good nose around the Blueridge from top to bottom, inside and out, and could only find one little niggle. The scratchplate is coming away from the body near the soundhole. It's a minor flaw that could be sorted with a small drop of glue.

**What does it sound like?**

Initial plucks and strums suggest this axe is punching well above its weight in the tonal department. Dig in and give it a firm plucking and it responds with a bright, pleasant tone. But flatpicking is what this folkster digs most of all; it craves

The vintage theme continues inside the body with classic x-bracing in the style of Martin guitar's original design

The fancy headstock inlay and Waverley-style machine heads give this guitar a cool vintage vibe

The BR-40D's solid spruce top should improve with age and give a more vibrant, balanced tone

**WHO'S IT FOR?**

First-time acoustic buyers who want something a bit special.

**INFORMATION**

**ORIGIN:** China  
**TOP:** Solid Sitka spruce  
**BACK AND SIDES:** Laminated mahogany  
**Fingerboard:** Indian rosewood  
**FRETS:** 20  
**INLAYS:** Mother-of-pearl headstock inlay, simple dot fret markers  
**HARDWARE:** Nickel Waverley-style machine heads  
**CASE:** No  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** Available at £279  
**CONTACT:** Gremlin 01273 491333  
**WEB:** www.gremlinmusic.co.uk

**ALTERNATIVELY**

Washburn WD32 – £199  
 Walden D610T – £199  
 Samick Windsor D6 – £179

**ON THE CD**

**TRACK 67**  
 We recorded the BR-40D straight to computer via a condenser microphone.

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plectrums just as bad as a T4 presenter craves the limelight.

Fingerpicking doesn't fare quite so well though. There's a definite stiffness about the Blueridge's tone, which is made even more obvious when you drop down strings for alternate tunings: low D's appear to have all the resonance of a brick wall. This being a dreadnought, you'd expect it to come over best when it's being strummed. All is not lost however, and it should be said that solid top guitars need a certain amount of playing in order to develop their tone. We would expect this Blueridge to 'wake up' after a few months of playing. Buying a good quality guitar like the BR-40D is not just an investment of money: it takes time too.

**Sold?**

Yes. This guitar is no lemon, baby. In fact at this price, it's more of a peach. If we wake up one Christmas morning to find that Santa has left us a Blueridge under the tree, we'd be well chuffed. This is the kind of guitar that a beginner would go ape for, and more experienced players will enjoy it's many charms too. Reservations regarding the stiff tone aside, the BR-40D should be on your must-try list when you hit the shops. This guitar might just be 'the one'...

*FOR: Looks more expensive than it is; Waverley-style tuners, headstock inlay  
 AGAINST: Sounds a bit stiff – give it a few months for the solid top to wake up*

**TG RATING:** ★★★★★