



# OZARK DELUXE L MODEL

Smaller-bodied guitars seem to be increasingly fashionable at present, and while a dreadnought or jumbo guitar's larger body size will always give it the edge when it comes to sheer volume or low end, there are plenty of us who still savour the more prominent mid-range and balanced sound that a more diminutive body shape can produce.

This Deluxe L Model guitar from Ozark is roughly similar in size and shape to Gibson's L-00 model, a favourite of pre-war folk and blues pluckers. With a solid spruce top and solid mahogany back and sides, not to mention a discreet on-board preamp and undersaddle pickup, this Chinese-made acoustic appears to offer an awful lot for not a lot of dough. So how does it handle?

## BODY & NECK

As you might guess, Ozark's Deluxe range contains the company's most up-market models, and to that end we find a close-grained spruce top and a handsome mahogany back and sides on this guitar. The two-piece back is neatly bookmatched and, on this particular example, exhibits a very attractive grain.

Despite its compact size, this guitar's body is quite deep – it's only a centimetre or two more shallow than a dreadnought – and this helps to keep the Deluxe L feeling substantial yet cuddly. In fact, the back has a very slight arch to it, moving from around 105mm in depth at the edge to 115mm at the centre.

GBINFO	
<b>OZARK DELUXE L MODEL</b>	
PRICE:	£325
BUILT IN:	China
SCALE LENGTH:	629mm (24.75 inches)
NUT WIDTH:	42mm (1.65 inches)
STRING SPACING AT NUT:	34mm (1.34 inches)
TOP:	Solid spruce
BACK & SIDES:	Solid mahogany
NECK:	Mahogany
FINGERBOARD:	Rosewood
FRETS:	19 slim
BRIDGE:	Rosewood
STRING SPACING AT BRIDGE:	54mm (2.1 inches)
ELECTRONICS:	Artec undersaddle transducer & end-pin preamp
MACHINEHEADS:	Grover open-g geared, chrome
WEIGHT:	2.2kg (4.75lbs)
FINISHES:	Vintage sunburst only
CASE:	Fitted hard case included
LEFT-HANDERS:	No
<b>CONTACT:</b> Stentor Music PHONE: 01737 240226 WEB: www.ozark-acoustic.com	

THIS VINTAGE-FLAVOURED ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC FROM OZARK'S DELUXE RANGE SHOWS LOUIS THORNE THAT BIGGER IS NOT NECESSARILY BETTER...



The rosewood bridge is fitted with a compensated saddle

The body features neat plastic binding front and back, which frames the top very nicely. This binding is echoed in the guitar's simple but elegant rosette. A small plastic teardrop-shaped scratchplate is fitted underneath the soundhole, though unfortunately this has been stuck on a little carelessly so that it overlaps the rosette in places.

A very nice looking bit of rosewood forms the bridge, which is fitted with an intonation-compensated bone saddle. This is a very welcome addition, though the square edge on the bass side could perhaps do with a bit of filing down to make right-hand damping a slightly more comfortable proposition.

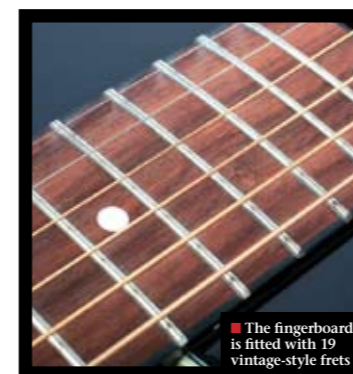
The guitar's high-gloss 'vintage sunburst' finish really looks the part, adding a classy feel without being overly fancy. The mahogany neck is similarly glossy but feels smooth and never sticky. Its slim profile has a pronounced V in the lower positions, which proves very comfortable and should provide a good compromise between the speediness of a slim neck and the left-hand support of a chunkier profile.

The 19 slim, vintage-style frets are properly finished and seated in a rosewood fingerboard, inlaid with simple dot markers. The fret ends and fingerboard edges have been smoothly rounded off, though there are some scruffy file marks above the 14th fret, where the neck joins the body. Admittedly, this is a more difficult area in which to work the edges of the neck, what with the guitar's soundboard in the way, but it's nevertheless unfortunate on a guitar from the top of the manufacturer's range. There should be no affect on tone or playability, however, and it's worth remembering that this guitar is very reasonably priced.

At the other end of the neck there is a bone nut, neatly filed but perhaps



The high-gloss 'vintage sunburst' finish adds a touch of class



The fingerboard is fitted with 19 vintage-style frets



The square headstock features a neatly inlaid Ozark Deluxe logo

just a little bit too low, since there is a hint of buzzing, especially on the high strings. Finally, a Martin-esque square headstock features a set of open-g geared old-fashioned Grover tuners and a neatly executed Ozark logo.

## ELECTRONICS

It would have been quite easy to miss this section out since the Ozark's Artec pickup system, which uses a piezo undersaddle transducer, is about as unobtrusive as you can get. There are no controls of any sort on the body, just an end-pin jack input that also houses the preamp circuitry, and a 9V battery secured by a clip inside the guitar's soundhole. This may not please those with a penchant for tweekery, and on a gig you will be left rather at the mercy of the sound engineer, but this is just as it would be if you were stood in front of a mic.

Battery replacement will necessitate slacking off the strings – not ideal if you're in a hurry – but given the preamp's uncomplicated nature you should expect battery life to be long.

As a way of expanding this guitar's versatility as a working instrument, without having to cut great holes in the body, this type of system has a lot to recommend it. Our only complaint is that it would be reassuring to have a slightly larger flare on the end pin around which to secure the strap.

## SOUNDS

First impressions are favourable when picking up and playing the Deluxe L. It provides a very sweet-sounding mid-range response with more bass than you might expect, although nothing like the booming low end typical of a dreadnought, for example. In practice, this means that this guitar lends itself particularly well to fingerpicking styles, with the mids singing out without being overpowered by the bass. The high-frequency articulation is good, and the Deluxe L provides a satisfying strum, though not quite matching the dynamic range or top-end sparkle of some more expensive guitars.

There's a fairly even volume balance

**OZARK L MODEL**

A LOOK AT THE NON-DELUXE L MODEL ACOUSTIC

The solid back and sides and Artec pickup of the Deluxe L model set you back by a bit under a hundred pounds. How do we know? Because the regular Ozark L model, without the aforementioned appointments, costs £240.

The Ozark L model has a solid spruce top, a laminated mahogany back and sides and no electronics. Other differences include a rounder, more C-shaped neck profile and a more flamboyant headstock shape. Comparing sounds, the Deluxe model has a superior bass response that leaves its cheaper sibling feeling a little under-powered. Considering the relatively small price difference, we would opt to save our pennies for a while longer and go for the Deluxe.

**GBOPINION**

**OZARK DELUXE L MODEL**

**GOLD STARS**

- ★ Solid wood construction
- ★ Balanced acoustic tones
- ★ Attractive price

**BLACK MARKS**

- Some minor cosmetic blemishes
- Some fret buzz

**IDEAL FOR...**

Fingerpickers after a smart guitar for not much cash

**GBRATING**

★★★★☆

across the strings and up and down the neck, helped no doubt by the D'Addario EXP strings that are fitted as standard to Ozark's deluxe guitars. Some notes in the upper register are rather buzzy, a sign that the frets are not all perfectly level. A fret dress or even just some slightly heavier strings and a higher action could help to rectify this, though ideally this shouldn't be necessary.

Plugged in, the Artec preamp provides a strong, defined sound that mirrors the guitar's acoustic character but with some of the hard-edged, artificial attack that is common to many piezo undersaddle pickups. The output from the end-pin preamp is fairly low (although not atypically so) and with the absence of any controls there is no way of altering this, but the plug-and-play nature of this instrument is appealing.

## CONCLUSION

The Ozark Deluxe L Model is an easy-playing, great-looking guitar that provides a nicely balanced sound that should especially appeal to fingerpickers. Its acoustic volume is relatively limited, but the unobtrusive pickup system makes this instrument a much more gig-worthy proposition and provides competent if not outstanding tones. Despite its 'Deluxe' moniker, this guitar is still eminently affordable and, minor niggles concerning cosmetic details and setup aside, there is little to criticise. For those who are after a well-made, vintage-styled acoustic, this Ozark looks very tempting. **GB**