



## Ozark 3755, 3760 & 3775 £455, £340 & £495

### OZARK 3755

**PRICE:** £455 (inc case)

**ORIGIN:** China

**TYPE:** Dreadnought electro-acoustic

**TOP:** Solid spruce

**BACK/SIDES:** Solid rosewood

**MAX RIM DEPTH:** 124mm

**MAX BODY WIDTH:** 400mm

**NECK:** Mahogany, glued in

**SCALE LENGTH:** 643mm

**TUNERS:** Gold-plated, diecast

**NUT/WIDTH:** Bone/43mm

**FINGERBOARD:** Bound rosewood with snowflake markers

**FRETS:** 20, thin

**BRIDGE/SPACING:** Rosewood with bone saddle/55mm

**ELECTRICS:** Artec under-saddle pickup and active endpin preamp; internal battery holder

**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.36/5.2

**OPTIONS:** 3750 acoustic dreadnought with solid mahogany back/sides (£340)

**LEFT-HANDERS:** Not at present

**FINISH:** Gloss natural

**Stentor**

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**www.ozark-acoustic.com**

The numbers don't mean much, but the guitars themselves look like a significant step forward for this folk-friendly brand by **Jim Chapman**

Up to now Ozark's line-up of acoustics and electros, as varied as it is, has tended to be lumped together without any particular focus. You could, for example, find a little travel guitar sharing the same page as an acoustic bass and a Maccaferri-style 'Hot Club' strummer. The new Chinese-made Deluxes, therefore, represent two firsts. They have a distinct pigeonhole of their own, and they are the first Ozarks offering all-solid wood specifications. The series is a concise one – six models divided between a pair each of dreadnoughts, folks and cutaway auditorium electros. The main difference within each body style is a choice of either mahogany or rosewood back and sides.

### 3755

Within Ozark's obscurely prosaic catalogue numbering system, the 3755 is the dearer of the two dreadnoughts. The price difference is explained by its rosewood back and sides and the fact that it incorporates an Artec active endpin system, which the mahogany version doesn't. This is a potential selling point in itself, because non-cutaway guitars around this price fitted with a straight-out electro system are

### All three of these Ozark Deluxes pass with pretty much flying colours

rare. They tend to be the preserve of either very cheap boxes with passive piezo systems or high-end luthier-made instruments whose customers don't want their guitars butchered for fitting a rim-mounted preamp. You'll find few in the mid-price sector, Guild's GAD50E being a notable exception.

Styled along square-shouldered Martin lines, the 3755 broadly sets the cosmetic agenda for the Deluxe Series as a whole. The main feature in common is the spruce top's cream-bound herringbone purfling, which is accompanied by a similarly inlaid soundhole rosette, also included on the cutaway electro. All the Deluxes carry a wood-mosaic centre strip down the back, are entirely gloss lacquered, and use bone nuts and saddles. One facility none of them has is a second strap button, something that should be included at least on the electros.

Though the lacquering isn't the lightest treatment you're likely to come across, it's very well buffed, reflecting the generally high standard of

presentation. The internals, with the anticipated reinforcing strips around the rims, are clean and tidy; the clean, straight-grained appearance of the spruce and rosewood justify their claimed AAA-grade provenance, while the bound rosewood fingerboard's snowflake markers are precisely inlaid without any evidence of filler. The traditional spade peghead has rarely been used on previous Ozarks except for slot-head models, and here it is given a series identity with an inlaid light wood plaque bearing the logo and 'deluxe' motif.

With only tiny variations in depth, the Deluxes' necks adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. As described for this dreadnought it's a three-piece, glue-jointed mahogany affair, with an intermediate scale length and fashioned to a mainstream width and depth and a comfortable 'C' profile. Slight string-bending scratchiness suggests the frets tops could do with a more thorough polish, but they're otherwise well fitted and dressed. Our sample's action is a little on the high side and could easily be brought down, though not to a fret-hugging extent due to an only moderate amount of break-angle remaining over the saddle.



OZARK 3755	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

■ **WE LIKED** Warm, fluid voicing; discreet electro versatility thanks to endpin system

■ **WE DISLIKED** Bit more fret-top polishing needed, but only a minor niggle

It's not so slight, however, to set neck-pitch alarm bells ringing. There's no bellying either.

**SOUNDS:** Guitar makers' blurb invariably refers to the richness of rosewood-backed acoustics, even if that is an attribute not always lived up to. Happily, it certainly is on this Ozark. It really is an appealingly warm-sounding dreadnought, with a lush, fluid sustain and plenty of low-end body and resonance. Some of us might like a little more top end snap to the attack than we hear here, but more would likely be happy to forgo that for the guitar's engagingly mellow, maturely voiced dynamics.

The Artec endpin system proves a bonus. It packs an abundant amount of gain – our sample's output is well balanced across the strings – and the sound is pleasingly natural if a tad mid-forward. In a solo context this may require a little EQ tweaking at the amp or desk, but almost certainly not in a band situation where other instruments, particularly keyboards, tend to have the effect of sucking the mid-range out of a guitar's sound.

### 3760

This is the cheaper, mahogany-backed version of the two non-cutaway folks, or 000s, and hence does not include the endpin system that – as on the dreadnoughts – comes with the higher priced rosewood model. The motif on the headstock and the spruce top's



All the Deluxes carry a wood-mosaic centre-strip down the back

herringbone purfling again make the Deluxe Series cosmetic statement; elsewhere it's swings and roundabouts as the guitar gains a tortie pickguard but loses the herringbone in the rosette. The rosewood fingerboard continues to be bound, although the position markers are economised to plain dots. Another minor saving is chrome rather than gold-plated machineheads. Frankly, none of this really matters one way or the other – it's a good looking, very tidy instrument and the body timbers seem to be high quality examples, again supposedly triple-A grade.

There's little to say about the neck of the 2760 that hasn't already been outlined for the dreadnought's, except to note that there are better-polished fret tops and a slightly lower action height on this example. A nice player, in short.

**SOUNDS:** This guitar certainly does the 000 thing well. The sound is crisply defined for picking, and there's a pleasant airy spring to the dynamics, which often emerges with a spruce/mahogany combination on this size of instrument. The overall tone is perhaps a little coldly bright under a plectrum, but switching to fingerstyle with a thumbpick unlocks more low-end warmth to balance things out nicely.

### 3775

We are now into full-blown electro territory, with both the mahogany and rosewood versions of this cutaway auditorium (the 3775 is the latter) carrying a four-band Artec system with onboard tuner. Whichever of the two we're talking about, Stentor has been quite clever in aspects of the design. The lazy approach would simply have been to hew a cutaway into the folk

## The rivals

<b>OZARK 3755</b>	
Guild GAD50E	£669
Farida D62AN	£649
Faith FSCEHG	£539

**Guild's non-cutaway GAD50E includes wood bindings and a Fishman Matrix 1 active endpin system. Another non-cut dreadnought, the D62AN from Farida sports deluxe wood-bound abalone trim and carries a Fishman Onboard Aura offering six blendable virtual mic images. A cutaway alternative with onboard controls is Faith's Saturn Hi-Gloss which features maple body bindings, ebony fingerboard and bridge and Shadow's two-band SH863 preamp with recessable knobs.**



#### OZARK 3760

As 3755 except...

**PRICE:** £340 (inc case)

**TYPE:** Folk-size acoustic

**BACK/SIDES:** Solid

mahogany

**MAX RIM DEPTH:**

105mm

**MAX BODY WIDTH:**

386mm

**TUNERS:** Chrome

diecast

**FINGERBOARD:** Bound

rosewood with dot

markers

**ELECTRICS:** None

**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.0/4.4

**OPTIONS:** 3765 folk

electro (£455) with solid

rosewood back/sides and

Artec active endpin

system

### The rivals

#### OZARK 3760

Aria AF65 £399

Ayers AS £399

Blueridge BR143 £429

**Aria's top-range AF folk**

**is all-solid Engelmann**

**spruce/mahogany, with an**

**abalone rosette and**

**decorative position**

**markers. Similarly**

**timbered but with a**

**Sitka spruce top, the**

**AS from Ayers carries**

**a wood-inlaid rosette**

**and a plain rosewood**

**fingerboard with just**

**side dots. Price includes**

**a case. Blueridge's**

**BR143 Historic 000,**

**also solid spruce/solid**

**mahogany, lays on the**

**vintage-style eye-candy**

**with an amber-tint top,**

**elaborate shell-inlaid**

**peghead motifs and a**

**vivid dalmatian-tortie**

**pickguard. All the**

**guitars are non-cutaway.**

OZARK 3760	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
<p>■ <b>WE LIKED</b> Its all-round appeal as a picker-friendly 000</p> <p>■ <b>WE DISLIKED</b> Nothing really</p>	

**The 3760 is a guitar that certainly does the 000 thing well. The sound is crisply defined for picking, and there's a pleasant airy spring to the dynamics**

model and bung in the preamp. Instead, the company has come up with a distinct body style that's more stage-performance orientated. At 408mm (16-inches) across the lower bouts it's significantly wider than the folk, but at the same time the maximum rim depth is some 11mm shallower, which means very good handling comfort. The result is actually like a cross between an auditorium and grand auditorium.

From here on out the design rationale seems to become a tad muddled. Yes, it bears the Deluxe Series' herringbone purfling and snowflake-marker hallmarks, and yet for some reason the decision has been made to feature Ozark's wave-topped headstock that is used, somewhat at random, on various of the brand's cheaper instruments. Merely displaying a sideways Ozark logo, this detracts from the Deluxe identity that the spade peghead with its plaque instantly endows on the other instruments within the series. From an audience viewpoint, and purfling aside, there's consequently little to mark out the 3775 or its 3770 mahogany



The all-solid wood Deluxe range aims for a distinct identity

### Folk heroes

**Ozark is a brand that specialises in traditional instruments**

While our review concerns three of its latest acoustic guitars, Ozark is probably more widely known for its other categories of stringed instruments. Introduced as a house brand by UK distributor Stentor Music some 25 years ago, the first Ozarks were banjos and mandolins. They were made in Japan, but the name, with its Arkansas mountains and American backwoods associations, was very much in keeping with the kind of instruments these were and the sort of music that would typically be played on them.

Acoustic and electro-acoustic guitars, as well as one or two archtop jazz electrics, came along later and today cover many body styles, but the range has continued to cater in depth for the more specialist folk instrument

needs. From an extensive 125-model catalogue, there are over 30 banjos of different types to choose from, a goodly array of mandolins, mandolas and bouzoukis, and even an autoharp and Appalachian dulcimer. On top of that are a dozen-plus metal and wood resonator guitars, in round and square neck and various cone configurations.

The fact that Ozarks are predominately budget/mid-price instruments, nowadays sourced from several factories in China and Korea, clearly hasn't precluded the nod of approval from a variety of seasoned pro players out there. Joe Brown, for instance, recently purchased a sackful of mandolins and resonators, while Fairport Convention's maestro fiddler and multi-instrumentalist Chris Leslie regularly performs onstage with his 2255 F-style Ozark mandolin. "It plays great," he says.



**OZARK 3775**

As 3755 except...

**PRICE:** £495 (inc case)

**TYPE:** Cutaway auditorium electro

**MAX RIM DEPTH:** 94mm

**MAX BODY WIDTH:** 408mm

**FINGERBOARD:** Unbound rosewood with snowflake markers

**FRETS:** 21, thin

**ELECTRICS:** Artec under-saddle pickup; Artec AGE-TN preamp with volume, bass, middle, treble, presence, auto-chromatic tuner, battery status LED, quick-release battery holder

**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 2.16/4.75

**OPTIONS:** 3770 cutaway folk electro (£410) with solid mahogany back/sides and Artec system as above



The 3775's piezo pickup caused us some concerns

**The rivals**

**OZARK 3775**

Crafter TV200CEQ £439

Faith FVHG £529

Turner 82CE £479

Features of Crafter's all-solid spruce/mahogany auditorium cutaway include a fingerstyle-width neck and a Baggs LR-T Pro system with three-band EQ plus mid scoop and tuner. Faith's cutaway Venus Hi-Gloss is solid spruce/solid rosewood, with ebony tuner buttons matching the fingerboard and bridge, and a two-band Shadow SH863 preamp including recessable rotary controls and EQ Shape. Price includes case. The Taylor-influenced 82CE grand concert cutaway from Turner is also all-solid spruce/rosewood, powered by a B-Band A3.2 system.

**The Artec endpin system proves a bonus. It packs an abundant amount of gain – output is well balanced across the strings – and the sound is pleasingly natural**

→ stablemate as a top-range Deluxe. Another oddity is that, whereas the dreadnoughts and folks have bound fingerboards, the 3775's is left unbound. One can only speculate that it's a cost saver to keep the price under the magic £500. Otherwise, if only for the sake of series continuity, bound would be better.

**SOUNDS:** Despite the different body dimensions and back/sides timber, the 3775 sounds very similar to the 3760 folk, both tonally and in acoustic volume and dynamics. If anything, the overtones are slightly topnier and tinklier, which one wouldn't necessarily expect from the rosewood, though the mid-range has a perhaps smoother-edged flavour to it.

Aside from a papery and brittle top end if the treble and presence bands are applied too enthusiastically, the Artec system does a competent job, and its auto-chromatic tuner is fast-responding, stable and accurate. However the preamp, and hence the quality of powered performance, is badly served by our sample's under-saddle pickup set-up, which is seriously out of balance across the strings. The bottom A and E are dramatically weaker in output, which also contributes the possibly unfair impression that the overall gain is rather punier than the dreadnought's endpin system's. Output imbalances are regrettably common with piezo systems but, if only modest, they can be lived with. The situation here,

OZARK 3775	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Playability	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
<p>■ <b>WE LIKED</b> Excellent playability</p> <p>■ <b>WE DISLIKED</b> Badly balanced piezo output; no second strap button; why the different headstock?</p>	

though, is so noticeably skewed that you'd simply have to insist that the dealer's guitar tech sort it out before stumping up the readies.

**Verdict**

For quality of build and presentation – and for having a very likeable common neck profile – all three of these Ozark Deluxes pass with pretty much flying colours, and it's good to see that the prices for these guitars generously include hard cases. The guitars are significantly better than any previous Ozarks this reviewer has tried. Taken individually, the warm-hearted dreadnought impresses without reservation, and its endpin system is an ace card up its sleeve. The 3760 folk will compete well in the 000 stakes and does a pleasing job in a sure-footed, pick-wise manner. It's only over the cutaway electro that a minor question mark hangs. Not so much for our sample's wayward piezo – that's easily curable – but for its slight identity crisis. Fortunately, that's also readily rectified if Stentor has a mind to: simply change the headstock so it looks like a fully paid-up member of the Deluxe club. 📌

**Ozark 3755**

**Guitarist RATING** ★★★★★

**Ozark 3760**

**Guitarist RATING** ★★★★★

**Ozark 3775**

**Guitarist RATING** ★★★★★