



If US prices make your wallet pucker up, be canny and check out the great acoustics being built right now in Europe. Jerry Uwins has a suggestion

BSG

OM27F Orchestral Acoustic

If you've only become a regular reader of *Guitar & Bass* since our first BSG review back in 2005, then chances are you won't be familiar with the name. Derived from the surname initials of its luthier partners, Pavel Bures and Jan Stovicek, BSG (the 'G' standing for, erm, 'guitars') is based in the Bohemia region of the Czech Republic, handmaking around 250 acoustics a year. The company was formed seven years ago, and the majority of sales have been in mainland Europe and the US – but about the same time that we first reviewed a BSG the situation began to change, and now a modest handful of shops in the UK are also stocking the line. It's something BSG is keen to expand on.

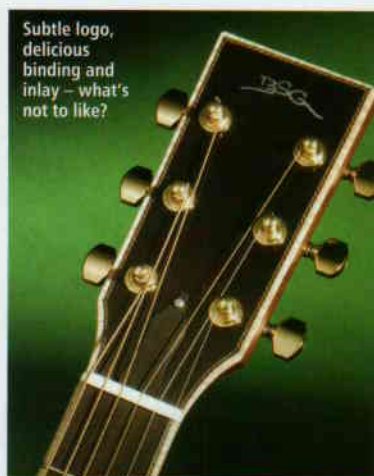
Despite its relatively low annual production, BSG offers a comprehensive choice of solid-top and all-solid-wood models, with many custom variations and timber options that wouldn't shame a full-blown mainstream brand. Body styles used to major on dreadnought, jumbo, grand jumbo and a thinline A-Pro stage

First Impressions

Wow, this is one looker of an instrument. It's quite small for an OM, but it's adorned in the best possible taste



Rosewood-backed headstock with gold Gotoh tuners



Subtle logo, delicious binding and inlay – what's not to like?

Flamed maple binding, top-notch rosewood and cedar – quality shines through every facet of this guitar

electro, but a new OM design has recently joined the fold.

In cost terms our OM27F (the 'F' denoting 'full'-solid construction) sits pretty much midway in BSG's 12-strong roster of timber specifications – from the cheapest, mahogany-backed Line 10 to the priciest, Rio rosewood Line 33. Line 27 indicates that the back and sides are Indian rosewood, and on our sample these are partnered by a top of solid cedar, though you can opt for a spruce front at the same price

BSG's interpretation of the OM style guitar is interesting. In the traditional CF Martin scheme of things, an Orchestra Model means a folk-type

auditorium (or 000) with a longer scale length, though some other makers adapt the design as a slightly larger-bodied instrument approaching mini-jumbo proportions. In contrast, BSG has gone in the other direction. The 15"-wide vintage-profiled body with its slim waist and shoulders is more what you'd associate with a compact-style concert or grand concert, though to some extent this is offset by rims that are somewhat deeper than is typical of these genres. Still, what's in a category? The fact is that this easy-handling OM is an unequivocally elegant instrument, made more so courtesy of its cosmetic finery. ➤

FACTFILE

OM27F

Description: Medium-bodied acoustic. Made in Czech Republic

Price: £1325 inc. case (though sterling prices may vary according to Euro exchange rate)

Build: Solid cedar top, solid rosewood back and sides. Mahogany neck with 20-fret maple-bound ebony fingerboard. Ebony bridge, gold Gotoh tuners, bone nut and saddle, two strap buttons

Options: Spruce top at same price. Standard OM27F in plainer trim is £1102 inc. case. OM27 with laminated rosewood back and sides, from £663. Choice of Venetian or Florentine cutaway – approx £60 and £100 extra respectively. Various custom options including electro systems. OMs are also offered in other back/side timbers – details and prices on request

Left-handers: Yes, to order no extra charge

Finish: Gloss natural body, satin neck

Scale length: 650mm (25.59")

Neck width: Nut 44mm
12th fret 55mm

Depth of neck: First fret 22mm
9th fret 24mm

String spacing: Nut 37.5mm
Bridge 55mm

Action as supplied: 12th fret treble 1.8mm
12th fret bass 2.0mm

Max rim depth: 106mm

Max body width: 382mm

Fingerboard radius: Approximately 11"

Weight: 2.25kg/4.95lb

Contact: BSG ☎ 00420 465 613 560

Web: www.bsguitars.cz

THE COMPETITION

STONEBRIDGE OM32-SM

Another Czech-made picker, from the Furch factory, presented in satin-finish, all-solid spruce/mahogany and including tortie/herringbone top purfling and 44.5mm nut width

RRP: £949

LAKEWOOD M32

Gloss-body solid spruce/solid rosewood auditorium with a wider 46mm fingerstyle neck and featuring maple/rosewood purflings and an abalone-inlaid wood rosette

RRP: £1389

ATKIN OM

Slimmer-necked, this Brit-made all-solid spruce/rosewood OM has an ebony fingerboard and bridge. Cedar top is a no-extra-cost option, and the price includes tortie-bound herringbone purfling

RRP: £1350

Talking of which, it should be made clear that the cheaper, standard-spec OM27F is a plainer-looking affair. Our sample's £200-or-so premium buys a few custom touches, most alluring of which is the flame maple-bound herringbone purfling that graces the top and the neck, including up around the perimeter of the ebony and rosewood-capped spade peghead. The back is given a similar treatment minus the herringbone, and the maple decoration extends to a broad centre stripe, and wide inlays either side of the bolt-on neck join and across the base block. The effect, frankly, is stunning and dead class, and it's all executed with exacting precision.

Indeed, quality shines through every facet of the instrument's materials and construction. Under the immaculately buffed gloss lacquer the straight, even-grained rosewood is clearly a high grade of timber, the cedar has an appealing warmly aged hue, while internally the linings are applied classical-guitar fashion using plain rather than slotted (or kerfed) strips of wood. This requires more painstaking craftsmanship, since such linings are more difficult to form to shape than the bend-friendly kerfed variety. Given the guitar's super-fine exterior detailing it's no surprise to find the inside as clean as a whistle, too.

It's also encouraging on such a traditional instrument to find a second strap button pre-fitted. Unlike most, which are secured somewhere on the



Warm-sounding, sensitive and fast to open up, cedar tops are ideal for fingerstyle guitars

With a 'scaled-down dreadnought' sound, this versatile player can dish it out as well as convey subtlety

neck heel, this one's located on the shoulder. It looks like this might cause stress to the rim, but the button is screwed into a small block of wood behind on the inner face, so everything's firmly and stably secured. One minor downside of the button's positioning is that the guitar is slightly neck-heavy on the strap, though it tends to feel that way just sitting on the lap. Aside from 12-strings, this is pretty unusual on acoustics and, on what is a quite heavy instrument for its size, I can only put this down to the density – hence weight – of the mahogany used for the neck. Were it a 12-frets-to-body design the question wouldn't arise.

The neck itself though – 25.5" scale with a satin finish and a no-marker ebony fingerboard – is a beaut. Fashioned to fairly wide fingerstyle proportions with a 44mm nut and an evenly rounded average-depth profile, it plays like a dream. This isn't just thanks to the superbly manicured thin fretting and comfort-bevelling along the maple binding, but also to quite one of the best overall set-ups I've come across. The low, buzz-free action feels electric-slick, yet there's still plenty of break-angle over the saddle, helping give an evenly taut response from the strings. Excellent.

SOUNDS

Though it tips the scales more than you'd expect of this size of acoustic, this OM's weight proves no drawback to responsiveness. It has a kind of 'scaled-down dreadnought' sound, with plenty of firmness and warmth in the low end, and quite eager dynamics

and a sense of generous tonal robustness. Allied to this, as befits its grand concert proportions, is an appealing degree of picking clarity and fluid-edged brightness, adding up to a versatile player that can dish it out as well as convey subtlety. That's a rewarding combination to have under your fingertips.

VERDICT

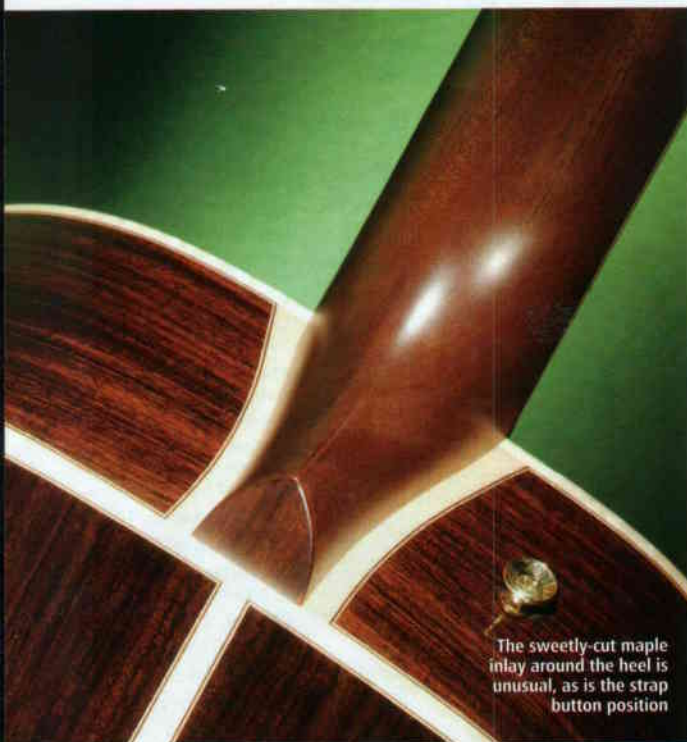
In whatever way makers interpret the design brief, so-called OM acoustics are enjoying a higher profile than they have for many a year, perhaps because they offer a standard of performance that's not that far short of a full-size instrument, yet they're comfortable and relatively compact to hold. They may not be ousting dreadnoughts from the top spot just yet, but expect more players to be discovering their virtues – of which this aesthetically graceful BSG has many. Truly fab build and finishing, an equally fab neck, a quality of sound that readily cuts the mustard and, considering all this, an asking price that's so darn reasonable. In handcrafted realms, value doesn't come any better.

FINAL SCORE

Build Quality	20/20
Playability	18/20
Sound	16/20
Value for money	20/20
Vibe	18/20

TOTAL 92%

Good for... an outstanding-value handcrafted picker, with cosmetics to drool over.
Look elsewhere... if slight neck-heaviness is going to niggle



The sweetly-cut maple inlay around the heel is unusual, as is the strap button position