

New Gear

For a Song RAINSONG ADVANCED SERIES

A-WS1000 ACOUSTIC/ELECTRIC BY PETER S. KOHMAN

RAINSONG'S NEW Advanced Series line of guitars are more affordable versions of the company's innovative instruments. The A-WS1000, a full-body acoustic-electric with a wide cutaway is, like the manufacturer's high-end models, made entirely of carbon fiber/graphite composites. The great advantage all RainSongs have over conventional guitars is their extreme toughness and stability, and the fact that they are basically impervious to the temperature and humidity changes that can wreak havoc with wooden guitars.

RainSong's patented Projection Tuned Layering (TM) construction system is used for the soundboard, which is built without any bracing. The graphite's thickness is varied for optimum vibration and needs no reinforcement. The five-inch deep body, also unbraced, has a gentle slope outwards from back to front as well as a molded "German curve" contour on the back. A Fishman Prefix Plus-T onboard pickup and preamp system, mounted in the upper bout, is standard equipment.

The eye-catching A-WS1000 has a colorful high gloss epoxy top finish instead of the more severe black graphite with abalone trim of the Classic series. The neck is "natural" graphite, with a vaguely iridescent checked pattern that has its own quirky cosmetic appeal. The composite fingerboard carries a simple dot pattern, and the top sports a small graphite-patterned pickguard.

The review model's top is finished in a striking deep blue, with a wide white/black/white side trim. The one-piece back-and-side unit is black, polished to a high gloss, while the composite bridge and fingerboard are in matte black. Chrome 18:1 ratio Gotoh tuners and TUSQ nut, compensated saddle and abalone-inlaid bridgepins complete the appointments.

The heel-less neck is shaped to a very thin "C" profile—more like a modern electric than most traditional acoustic necks. With a 1.75-inch nut width, 25.4-inch scale and unfettered access well beyond the 14th fret, it makes for a very fast playground, indeed. Those accustomed to beefier vintage-style necks may find this contour a bit strange at first, but it's certainly comfortable to play and easy to get used to. This is RainSong's first neck built with an adjustable truss rod, which allows maximum flexibility for action adjustments.

Even acoustic purists who shudder at the thought of a "synthetic" guitar would agree that the true test of an instrument is its sound.

And the A-WS1000's sound is very even and defined, with bass notes that

ring with pristine clarity and well-rounded trebles that offer a good deal of sustain and "meat."

The guitar's response is very even across

the board and open chords shimmer with surprising depth. This is a versatile guitar: whether you fingerpick, flatpick or strum complex chords, you'll find the A-WS1000 equal to the task. I found it to be particularly pleasing to my ear in open and dropped tunings, a realm where some guitars can lose definition or articulation.

You might say the A-WS1000, with its strong bass and treble registers and solid midrange, has a "modern" guitar sound. Vintage guitar fans will perhaps find the tone somewhat clinical. But the tradeoff is

a very versatile sound suitable to a wide range of playing styles, and a superbly flexible performing instrument.

The A-WS1000 shines even brighter when plugged in, where the even and defined acoustic sound is accurately amplified by the onboard Fishman system. Many great-sounding acoustics end up disappointing when electrified, so easily lost are the subtleties of tone. The RainSong has some aural similarities to an electric guitar to begin with, in that sustain and articulation are particular strong suits. Judicious use of the preamp's sliders can tweak in everything from a very delicate and breathy acoustic tone to some surprisingly chunky, almost solidbody sounds.

The RainSong catalogue describes the A-WS1000 as "the ultimate workhorse for the working, traveling musician," an assessment that is difficult to argue with, given the instrument's combination of durability and tonal flexibility. While it may not conjure up the same sort of magical woody appeal of an old D-28 or J-45, the A-WS1000 is a lot more likely to survive the rigors of the road and day-to-day gigging, use and abuse than its wooden brethren, vintage or modern. At a list price of \$1,499, which includes a very functional custom gig bag, the A-WS1000 offers the guitarist a superbly crafted and practical performing tool. ■

RAINSONG A-WS1000 (\$1,499)

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