



OM, Gee!

The McElroy OM Model

Brent McElroy is a Seattle luthier specializing in high-quality acoustics. One of them, the OM Model from his Generation 2 series, is inspired by old-school Martins. The concert-body guitar sports a bear-claw Adirondack spruce top (so named for its wide, raked grain), Madagascar rosewood back and sides, and a bolt-on Honduran mahogany neck.

Visually, the McElroy OM is a knockout. The rosewood back and sides abound in lovely figuring, while the top features an amboyna burl rosette that looks almost marbled and top and back binding of gorgeous flamed koa. The McElroy OM is one of the rare acoustics these days not meant to be plugged in. Certainly an aftermarket pickup could be installed, but it's truly refreshing to pick up an acoustic that doesn't have a preamp hacked into its upper bout, or even strap pegs, for that matter.

Ebony is used for the bridge, which has a bone saddle, and for the fingerboard, which has mother-of-pearl micro-dots along its side and thin maple inlays along its edge – a delightful bit of craftsmanship. The attractive, understated headstock features an overlay of Brazilian rosewood, a mother-of-pearl logo

inlay, gold Gotoh 510 tuning machines, and a bone nut. The OM's design accommodates 14 frets to the neck and 20 overall, which should satisfy most pickers, while the 25.4" neck scale and 2.25" string spacing at the saddle are great for fingerpicking.

Owing to its wider Martin-like string spacing, the McElroy OM gives the vibe of a guitar that needs to be fingerpicked. The neck's flatter and wider C profile fits comfortably, while the fingerboard setup is super-low and fast. The OM offers decent volume and projection, but, more importantly, sounds wonderfully balanced and even across the sonic spectrum.

Even the quietest passages sound clear and bell-like. Put through everything from gentle fingerpicking to fast flamenco-style shredding, the OM performs like a champ. You can try to find flaws, but you won't – the guitar is a winner from tip to tail.

So who will want the McElroy OM? This is a once-in-a-lifetime instrument made by a master luthier. But every guitarist should have at least one guitar in their ar-

MCELROY OM MODEL

Price: \$7,500 (base; \$8,500 as reviewed)

Info: www.mcelroyguitars.com



senal that can be judged by its craftsmanship, and the OM certainly fits the bill (even its Ameritage case sports a classy stitched McElroy logo). And, with its sturdy bracing and fanatical build quality, the McElroy OM will likely outlast any owner. If you're looking

for an effortlessly playing, visually stunning, and premium-sounding guitar meant to be played on the lap – onstage or in the studio with mics, or just at home on the front porch – check out the McElroy OM. It'll take your breath away. – **Pete Prown VG**