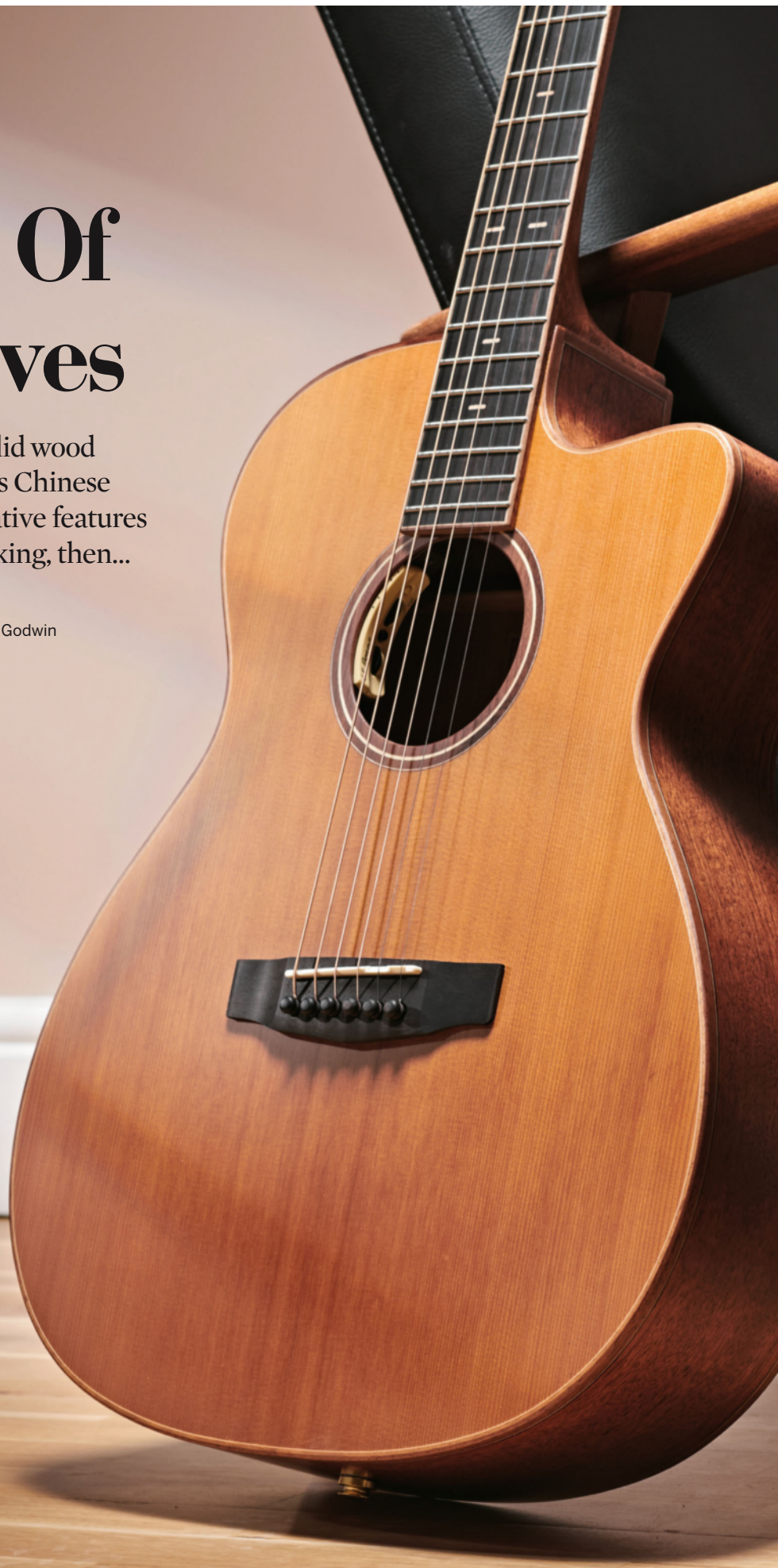


A Game Of Two Halves

A pair of contrasting all-solid wood electro-acoustics from Cort's Chinese workshop with a host of innovative features to their name. Better get cracking, then...

Words David Mead **Photography** Neil Godwin







CORT FLOW-OC & GOLD-A6 BOCOTE £1,149 & £959

CONTACT **Cort Guitars** PHONE +82 2 1800 6951 WEB www.cortguitars.com

What You Need To Know

1 So, what's the common denominator with these two?

Apart from the fact both these guitars have sprung from the same factory and bear the Cort marque, there's very little similarity between them. They merely represent samples from the array of acoustics available in the company's current catalogue.

2 Bocote... that's a new one

This is true. Similar in appearance to ziricote, bocote hails from Central America and North Amazon regions. Tone-wise it shares some of the qualities of a good rosewood with dashes of tonal colour similar to that of African blackwood.

3 Is this another 'alternative' wood, then?

Yes. And why not? Despite the fact many independent luthiers and big companies have a good (and perfectly legal) stock of the more endangered woods, the search for more sustainable tonewoods that veer away from the practices of the past continues apace.

Regular readers will have spotted the Cort name cropping up quite frequently with its well-received electric models. But as you also may already know, the huge manufacturing machine behind the brand, Cor-Tek, also builds guitars for some of the world's leading brands, not least PRS's electrics (in Indonesia) and its acoustics and hollowbodies in China, as well as Manson's start-up models and many, many more.

Our two new models are representative of Cort's own extensive acoustic range – we counted 14 different series on the company's website, many of which have a number of different instruments on offer, adding up to a considerable list.

Aside from being new 2022, all-solid wood models, there's no theme linking the duo before us; both these guitars are standalone models and so we will be looking at them individually, and the Flow-OC seems a good place to start.



2

It's a good-looker, with considerable kerb appeal fresh out of the box

3

The OC is an OM-sized cutaway, fitted with an LR Baggs Anthem pickup for live use. It's a good-looker, with considerable kerb appeal fresh out of the box. A closer look reveals a cedar top with mahogany back and sides, which is, of course, a fairly standard combo in acoustic guitars. Cedar is a favourite among fingerstylists. It's slightly more sedate than spruce, with a seductive warm tone, and doesn't really demonstrate a settling in or 'opening up' period. It will mature over the course of time, but won't change quite as much in tonal character as the various forms of spruce. Mahogany is part of royalty when it comes to guitar woods, bringing sweet highs, a punchy midrange and good rounded bass to the table.

So far so good, but it's in the profiling of the mahogany neck that we meet one of Cort's innovative features. If you cast your mind back to when Ernie Ball Music Man first introduced their Eddie Van Halen electric way back in the 1990s, you might remember that Eddie wanted the neck profile to feel 'worn in'. To this end, his signature guitar's neck was asymmetrical – there was almost an aircraft wing feel to it, with less roundedness on the treble side than on the bass. It's a similar idea with Cort's Ergo-A profiling, but the asymmetry changes as you proceed up the neck. This is a similar concept to compound radiusing

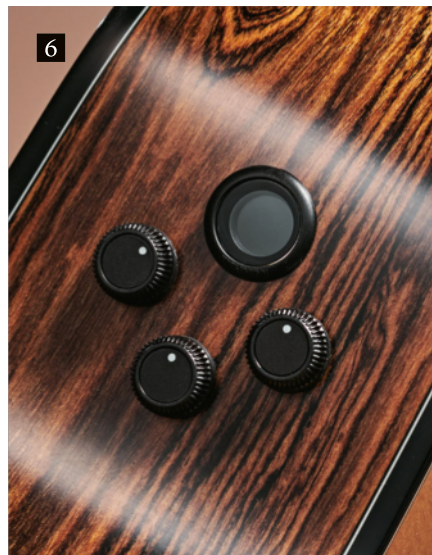
1. The Flow-OC is fitted with an LR Baggs Anthem pickup with the controls tucked away in the guitar's soundhole
2. A beautifully crafted cedar top sits atop the OC's mahogany back and sides and the cutaway gives access to the guitar's upper frets
3. The neck's heel is slimmer and flatter than on many of the OC's contemporaries



4. Another touch of elegance is the OC's gold-coloured tuners with ebony buttons

5. The Flow-OC's bridge has a compensated Tusq saddle and ebony pins

6. The Gold-A6 Bocote's pickup system is a Fishman Flex Blend with upper bout mounted controls and a handy built-in tuner



THE RIVALS

If your budget is around the £1k mark for an electro-acoustic, then the field is pretty much wide open, although you're unlikely to find all-solid wood construction from the premier league hereabouts. Cort's own acoustic range, which is fairly expensive in its own right, ought to be your first stopping point, as we've seen enough product coming from that direction where the build quality is nothing short of superb.

Alternatives would include Eastman, whose E20M comes with a cedar top and sapele back and sides and retails at £599 without electronics – the cost of installing a pickup would probably bring it up to the same price as the Flow-OC reviewed here. The company has a range of Auditorium models, too, like the AC308CE, which combines spruce and mahogany plus an LR Baggs Element pickup for £1,019.

Furch's website is always worth scrutinising, with its Blue OM CM offering the cedar mahogany combo at £899, but, again, a pickup would be extra. Guild, Takamine, Auden and Yamaha are also websites worth investigating as a multitude of wood and body-shape options exist here.

where a fretboard's camber changes between the lower and upper parts of the 'board to facilitate easier bending. Only here, we're talking about the other side of the neck. Science aside, we'll see what difference this makes when we get a little more hands-on with the guitar, a bit later.

There's an ebony fretboard with hand-rolled edges – another feature that gives the fretting hand a more comfortable ride and makes the fretboard feel like it's already seen some action. Ebony is used for the Flow-OC's bridge, string pins and tuning buttons, while maple and walnut make up the subtle rosette.

Walnut makes another cameo appearance as part of the neck reinforcement. Invisible to the eye, two strips of the wood lay either side of the truss rod. Another nice detail.

Turning to the OC's partner in crime, the Auditorium-shaped Gold-A6 is another good looking. One feature that hits us immediately is the highly figured back and sides – unusual at the instrument's sub-£1k price ticket. The choice of timber is off the beaten path, too, as this is bocote, a wood found in Central America and North Amazon and from the same family as ziricote. Its use as a timber in guitar-making is relatively new, and a little bit of research on our part reveals bocote has a tap tone similar to rosewood and shares some of the tonal characteristics with that wood, too.



An ebony fretboard with hand-rolled edges makes it feel like it's already seen some action

Big basses, loads of power and good sustain is the general consensus. There's even a hint of similarity in tonal response to African blackwood – another highly sought after timber, revered for its tonal fingerprint.

The bocote has been paired with a torrefied Sitka spruce top, labelled by Cort as 'Aged To Vintage' (or ATV if acronyms are your thing). We're very familiar with the effects that heat treatment can bring to the sound picture of acoustic guitars, advancing as it does the opening-up period to produce a more played-in tone.

The top has also been treated with a very thin UV finish, which allows the wood to breathe and vibrate more freely. Obviously a lot of thought has gone into producing a guitar with great tonal potential here and we're looking forward to hearing it sing. Meanwhile, the rest of the construction details are a mahogany neck – again reinforced by strips of walnut inside – an ebony 'board with rolled edges and a C-neck profile, symmetrical this time.



7

8

7. The A6's Sitka spruce top has been heat-treated via Cort's ATV – Aged To Vintage – system to enhance the guitar's tonal response

8. The finish on the guitar is extra thin in order to let the wood breathe

9. Bocote is native to Central America and North Amazon and is very attractively figured

9



The Gold-A6's stage-readiness is embodied in the Fishman Flex Blend, which combines an under-saddle pickup with a microphone located inside the soundhole. Aside from the usual volume and tone controls, the Flex Blend also comes equipped with a tuner, phase control and blend rotary.

Feel & Sounds

Returning to the Flow-OC, its OM body immediately welcomes us. It's probably the default choice of fingerpickers – more manageable than a dreadnought and more projection than a parlour. It sits in that Goldilocks region: not too big, not too small. We can feel the asymmetrical neck immediately, but it only takes moments before we're comfortable with it and forget it's there.

Sound-wise, the balance between the three main tonal areas – basses, mids and trebles – is very good indeed, with no noticeable troughs or peaks in frequency. It's an easy guitar to play; passing it around the office gained nods of approval from all concerned – we were charmed, let's put it that way.

Switching to the Gold A-6, the bocote and spruce pairing – not to mention the slightly larger Auditorium body size – results in more volume than from the Flow-OC. It's a big sound, packed with sustain and a good



10

range of harmonics, completely different to its OM counterpart, but not in a bad way. If we were to compare the output of the two, we would say that the OM is polite, demure and generally well-behaved, the Gold-A6 is lively, extroverted and boisterous.

Both were subject to a similar workout – a bit of blues picking, some chordal strumming and a little melodic fingerstyle – and both had all boxes ticked. Their different pickups, the OM's LR Baggs and A6's Fishman, were easy to dial in and gave a good account of the acoustic nature of the individual guitars.

Verdict

As mentioned, we've been knocked for six by the guitars (and amp) we've recently seen bearing the Cort name, and these two acoustics are definitely an extra feather in an already festooned cap. If we were asked to do such a thing, it would be difficult to choose between the two, as they both multitask in their own way. In other words, they might display different tonal attributes, but both are equally able – they just handle things slightly differently. If pressed, we'd probably choose the Flow-OC but that would be down to personal preference in body size. If you're in the market for an acoustic guitar that might break your heart (without breaking the bank), don't overlook the Cort brand. You might be surprised at what you find. **G**

7. Open back tuners add a certain vintage chic to the Cort -A6 Bocote's very stylish appearance



CORT FLOW-OC

PRICE: £1,149 (inc soft case)
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: OM Cutaway electro-acoustic
TOP: Cedar
BACK/SIDES: Mahogany
MAX RIM DEPTH: 105mm
MAX BODY WIDTH: 382mm
NECK: Mahogany with walnut reinforcement
SCALE LENGTH: 648mm (25.5")
TUNERS: Gold die-cast with ebony buttons
NUT/WIDTH: Graph Tech Tusq/45mm
FINGERBOARD: Ebony
FRETS: 20
BRIDGE/SPACING: Ebony with Tusq compensated saddle/58mm
ELECTRICS: LR Baggs Anthem
WEIGHT (LB/KG): 3.22/1.46
OPTIONS: None
RANGE OPTIONS: This model is the only Cort Flow Series instrument so far. The company has an array of different acoustics – including the Core and Earth ranges – which feature many different body designs and wood choices. See website for more details
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Natural satin

440 Distribution
01943 818599
www.cortguitars.com



9/10

PROS Packed with player friendly features, affordable, with easy playability and good sound

CONS Very little to report!



CORT GOLD-A6 BOCOTE

PRICE: £959 (inc soft case)
ORIGIN: China
TYPE: Auditorium Cutaway electro-acoustic
TOP: Sitka spruce
BACK/SIDES: Bocote
MAX RIM DEPTH: 117mm
MAX BODY WIDTH: 405mm
NECK: Mahogany with walnut reinforcement
SCALE LENGTH: 643mm (25.3")
TUNERS: Vintage gold
NUT/WIDTH: Bone/44.5mm
FINGERBOARD: Macassar ebony
FRETS: 20
BRIDGE/SPACING: Ebony with bone saddle/54.5mm
ELECTRICS: Fishman Flex Blend System
WEIGHT (LB/KG): 4.04/1.83
OPTIONS: The Gold AC is available with mahogany back and sides (£779)
RANGE OPTIONS: The 10-strong Gold Range includes the OC-6 Bocote (£959) and the auditorium size Gold-Edge (£1,499), with myrtlewood back and sides and comfort bevels.
LEFT-HANDERS: No
FINISH: Natural glossy

8/10

PROS Similarly decked out with thoughtful features, loud 'n' proud sound. The bocote adds to the general aesthetic

CONS Shock of a different tone wood may deter traditionalists