

ORTEGA

R-2009 15th Anniversary and RCE-1415M SBL

Have Ortega got it right with a new take on the traditional classical guitar? Russell Welton finds out. Buckle up!



Both of these instruments come complete with a case featuring textured crocodile skin leather effect finishes in very dark purple. The interior is equally as impressive, with respective chocolate or black plush linings which are deep and rippled in their pattern. To complete the trim of the cases there is heavy-duty gold stitching, along with sturdy gold-plated combination locks and feet to rest the case on. You really would want to take pride in protecting these cases – they are very attractive in their own right.

R-2009

Returning to the inside, your sense of satisfaction is enhanced with the provision of a tan suede leather guitar strap featuring the Ortega logo in full and, insightfully, an optional gold-plated strap button has been included – with the screw! Care and attention to these small details really does instil confidence when you remove the guitar from its strategically padded crib. As you do so, a small hygrometer gauge (for measuring air humidity) is revealed, fitted into the headstock cavity of the case – again a welcome inclusion.

Upon examining the guitar

itself, it is quite clear why so much care and consideration has been invested in the case, as the instrument's woods are also visually very impressive, exuding yet more class. The back sports a highly figured bookmatched pair of selected cocobolo panels, the colour variation of which is equally balanced from one side to the other. In the 'flesh' there are swathes of olive green in the middle, then panning through to cinnamon and russet hues, which then darken towards the perimeter, making for a framing effect of this sound chamber. Encapsulating this are rosewood sides and a beautifully clean and consistently grained Alpine spruce top. The body and back and sides are trimmed with binding, the theme of which is continued on to the rosewood machine head buttons and sandwiched centrepiece rosette. The top of the guitar has pearl effect binding, and double soundhole rings complete the centrepiece. There is an inherent air of quality about this instrument, both in its Spanish build and its honey-glazed lacquered finish, and I'm confident that even non-guitar players would appreciate the beauty on display here.

Is this borne out further in the sound and playability of the

guitar? I'm delighted to say that it is – the sound is crisp, fresh and lively. It is clear and articulate without being harsh or brittle, and there are no elements of new-guitar boxiness in its tone. Beginning with arpeggiated chords on the treble strings, the

guitar responds sweetly, with a chiming character well meshed with its substantial sustain and mellow reverb. The fingerboard is easy to navigate and tight grained, with a smooth and yet organic touch to the fingertips. Raking over the six strings with

Raking over the six strings with a more positive and even attack, the body opens in a wider and full-voiced resonating character which is thoroughly compelling, broad and quite strident.



The abalone soundhole inlay complements an already striking guitar



ORTEGA
R-2009 15th

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Technical specification

Manufacturer: Ortega
Price: £1,199
Body Size: Full size classical
Made In: Germany
Top: Solid Alpine spruce
Back & Sides: Cocobolo
Neck: Mahogany
Fingerboard: Rosewood
Frets: 19
Tuners: Gold plated rosewood
Nut Width: 1 7/8
Scale Length: 4/4
Onboard Electronics: Fishman Classic 4T
Strings Fitted: D'Addario
Left Handers: No
Gig Bag/Case Included: Deluxe Ortega Gig Bag
Optional Extra: Price including hard case: £1,271 (As reviewed)

Contact details

Active Music Distribution
 Tel: 0208 693 5678
www.activemusic.co.uk

What we think

Pros: Beautifully attractive guitar, equalled by its tone.
Cons: Some players may prefer a lighter construction.
Overall: A very impressive all-round performer.

Our Ratings Explained

5 Stars: Superb, Almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, Hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

Rating out of five

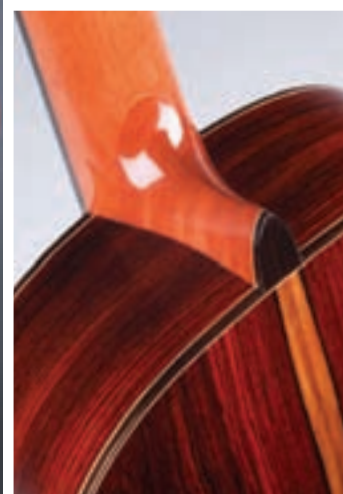
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★
SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★



Despite modern design elsewhere, for the headstocks Ortega have opted for a traditional design



Fishman on-board electronics



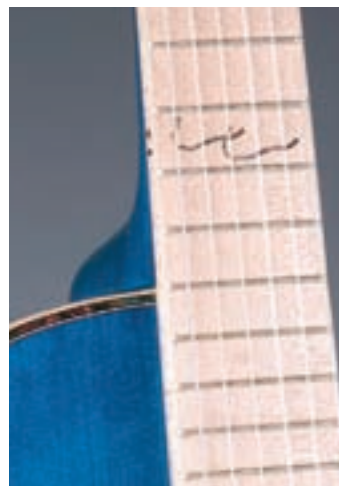
Build quality is impressive everywhere

At full volume the tone of the instrument takes on a more clinical and harder edge, which lends itself to a very concise playing style

a more positive and even attack, the body opens in a wider and full-voiced resonating character which is thoroughly compelling, broad and quite strident. As you play, it conjures images of spring melting into summer, which may be made more memorable than our recently short-lived UK seasons.

On to the preamp, which is a Fishman Classic 4T unit with 4-band graphic EQ – bass, mid, treble and brilliance. Plugged in to our AER combo there is a relatively even response, with a faithful reproduction of picking dynamics from thumb to fingernails, and a playability which falls very comfortably under the left hand without hideous intonation issues. One small noticeable point is the louder volume of the G string in comparison to the B and high E strings – perhaps due to its

greater mass. It is only apparent at higher pre-gain settings, and I would encourage you to take this into account depending on how you intend to amplify your sound. A good-quality



Interesting Fret marker on the RCE-1415M SBL

compressor would help if you needed high pre-gain settings for your harmonics or broad dynamics in your performance.

Overall, this is an incredibly endearing instrument which does have a musical soul, leaning heavily on the fringes of being outstanding.

RCE-1415M

Featuring the same hard case, although this time with the black lining and blue suede strap with Ortega's O logo, this guitar makes a bold statement in both looks and design. For many years I have wondered if a classical-guitar manufacturer would produce a guitar with a maple fingerboard. It's great to now see this as a reality.

With contrasting blue and light maple binding, the body touts abalone inlays which are rich in primary colours. It looks like a party waiting to happen. Perhaps the signature inlays to be found on the fingerboard and bridge may not be to all tastes but they are nonetheless minimalistic.

Made in China, this guitar has a light feel to the body construction and is housed in maple back and sides. I should

ORTEGA RCE-1415M SBL

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Technical specification

Manufacturer: Ortega
Price: £699
Body Size: Full Size Classical
Made In: Germany
Top: Solid Engelmann Spruce
Back & Sides: Flamed Maple
Neck: Maple
Fingerboard: Maple
Frets: 21
Tuners: Ortega Copper
Nut Width: 1 7/8"
Scale Length: 4/4
Onboard Electronics: Fishman Classic 4T
Strings Fitted: D'Addario
Left Handers: No
Gig Bag/Case Included: Deluxe Ortega Gig Bag
Optional Extra: Price including hard case: £771 (As reviewed)

Contact details

Active Music Distribution
 Tel: 0208 693 5678
 www.activemusic.co.uk

What we think

Pros: Unique, distinctive, bold and individual. Slim body with excellent upper-register access (note the 14th fret body join).

Cons: May not contain the warmth you would look for in a traditional classical.

Overall: A very specific character worth having in your arsenal for specific work.

Our Ratings Explained

5 Stars: Superb, Almost faultless.
4 Stars: Excellent, Hard to beat.
3 Stars: Good, covers all bases well.
2 or 1 Stars: Below average, poor.

Rating out of five

BUILD QUALITY
SOUND QUALITY
VALUE FOR MONEY



Close inspection of the RCE-1415M SBL reveals a lower quality finish than on the R-2009



On-board digital processing tuner

Much about this guitar is very definite: the responsiveness of the machine heads, the Prener, the exacting frequency response of the maple and the overall bold look

mention the rear of the neck is also in this azure blue lacquer completed with a matching heel cap. Forethought has also been applied to the input sockets offering both quarter-inch and XLR options.

The Prener LC (or preamp tuner combined) is responsive and functional, if slightly on the forgiving side, as the guitar snaps into tune with maybe more ease than a more sensitive tuner. Consistent results are obtainable just the same. It features the usual EQ controls, along with a volume knob and the additional bonus of giving you the option to select which note you wish to tune each string to. This chromatic tuning mode is reset to auto chromatic tuning when you turn the power off and then on again.

The quality of the fingerboard is excellent, and the slab of maple is thicker than you may see on numerous high-quality brand name guitars. With its 15" convex radius, barre chords are very comfortable to form. Although not including a bridge plate to help protect the bridge from the strings biting into the wood (as seen on the R-2009), there is a good coat of lacquer.

The sound of this guitar has individual personality. It is loud and bold and very bright indeed,

largely due to its construction and slab maple board. I noticed, with the volume set to about the quarter-past position (and the EQ set flat), there is a warmer output from the guitar than when you set the volume to maximum. At full volume the tone of the instrument takes on a more clinical and harder

edge, which lends itself to a very concise playing style and may perhaps make it a preference of fingerstyle players. I was particularly fond of the 1415M's vibrato and note sustain which was almost bell-like and very clear. Much about this guitar is very definite: the responsiveness of the machine heads, the Prener, the exacting frequency response of the maple and the overall bold look, and I would recommend the clinicians among you to at least try this guitar for its distinctive attributes and intrinsic brightness.

Russell Welton



The combination of beautiful cocobolo and blue finished maple makes both guitars stand out