

## FIRST PLAY



**FURCH MC  
BLUE GC-CM**  
£1,100

.....  
**WHAT IS IT?** A grand auditorium cutaway electro-acoustic



**FURCH MC  
ORANGE OMC-SR**  
£2,634

.....  
**WHAT IS IT?** A premium-grade OM cutaway electro-acoustic

# True Colours

A pair of acoustic guitars at contrasting price points from a builder based in the Czech Republic – how will they fare in today's highly competitive marketplace?

**Words** David Mead **Photography** Neil Godwin

**T**he Furch story starts back in the 70s when Frantisek Furch began making instruments in what was then socialist Czechoslovakia. In those days it was difficult to find good guitars, banjos and so on in the country and anybody setting up a building service was taking a risk as such things had been forbidden under the former communist regime. Imports were prohibitively expensive and so Frantisek – a metalworker by trade and keen musician by night – began to build instruments in his garage and word about their quality soon spread among his colleagues.

Fast forward to 1989 and the final collapse of communism in Czechoslovakia and Frantisek, free from the former political restrictions, opens his first factory. By that time his reputation as a first-class guitar builder had grown, although







1. The MC Blue GC-CM has an LR Baggs Element pickup system fitted with a side-mounted preamp with a built-in tuner and plenty of EQ options
2. A fully compensated Tusq saddle sits on top of an ebony bridge
3. The mahogany back and sides have a faux tortoiseshell binding

initially his instruments were available only to the home market. Over the ensuing years the company grew in size and today occupies a 16th-century mill complex in Velké Němčice in the Czech Republic, employing 60 skilled workers, producing a wide range of acoustic guitars.

Today, Furch offers its colour model lines – Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo and Violet – and the premium Rainbow Series, which allows customers to order their ideal instruments from 160 variable features, including body size, tonewoods, hardware and pickup systems.

The guitars we have in for review are both from the MC – which stands for Master's Choice – range, one from Orange on the model spectrum, the other Blue, and Furch tells us that the former offers a “perfectly balanced sound” while the latter is “responsive, with deep lows”. Both benefit from solid woods and represent different ends of the Furch price range, the Blue GC-CM (the letters stand for Grand auditorium Cutaway, Cedar, Mahogany) sitting around the £1k mark, while the Orange OMC-SR (OM Cutaway, Spruce, Rosewood) is just north of £2.5k. The two models differ not only in price but choice of tonewoods; the thing that unites them is doubtlessly the spectacular build quality for which Furch is rapidly becoming famous.

Starting with the MC Blue GC-CM, the first thing we notice is the weight – slightly heavier than we'd expected – and the fact that the finish here is matt satin, in complete contrast to its high-gloss stablemate. Furch has chosen a cedar and mahogany combo for the body woods, the top being western red cedar with African mahogany for the back and sides. In the spec list it says the grades of the woods here are AA, as opposed to the more glamorous AAA on the Orange OMC-SR. To be honest, you'd hardly be aware of this if you hadn't been told. The grain of the cedar is tight and straight with a light-ish reddy brown colour that will darken with age. No complaints about the mahogany, either, as everything looks in order here, too. The binding back and front of the body is faux tortoiseshell – matching the instrument's pickguard – and has been expertly applied throughout, lending the guitar a touch of subtle bling. The rosette is a double ring of black walnut, again, superbly administered, and a peek inside the soundbox reveals the level of craftsmanship is maintained under the hood.

The GC-CM's neck continues the mahogany theme, being essentially a one-piece affair – no visible scarf joints hereabouts – with a separate piece of wood for the heel, which itself has been capped with a piece of ebony.

The thing that unites the models is the spectacular build quality for which Furch is becoming famous

4. Furch guitars began back in the 1970s when metalworker Frantisek Furch started building instruments to supply local musicians in his native Czechoslovakia

At this point we should pause to consider something not visible to the naked eye but a thing that Furch takes great pains to point out: the neck joint and truss-rod assembly. In our travels we've seen all kinds of theories from a whole assortment of lone builders and major manufacturers regarding this essential part of the luthier's art. In the case of Furch, the brand has developed what it calls its CNR Dual Action system. Basically, this means the truss rod is capable of adjusting both concave and convex neck problems – nothing particularly new there, but the way the neck is attached to the body internally differs slightly from the norm.

The joint employs a rigid carbon casing that “maintains the neck in the set position over a period much longer than is the case with standard neck-joint designs and, at the same time, facilitates a gradual bow in the neck, a factor of essential importance for playability”. There's also a special alloy casting located in the neck heel to make sure the neck angle maintains its position. From the look of the exploded diagram on the Furch website, this is quite a chunky piece of metal that sits on top of – and extends well into – the guitar's heel and could explain the slightly surprising weight factor we noticed earlier. It's an interesting

The transparent pickguard means the OMC's good looks aren't interrupted in any way

idea and one that can only be proven over the course of time. For now, though, it remains sight unseen, albeit a slightly weighty reminder that new approaches are at work here.

Moving on, the MC Blue GC-CM's fretboard is ebony with a Tusq nut and string saddle, that latter sitting atop an ebony bridge.

Looking at the MC Orange OMC-SR now and we notice an upgrade in terms of body woods and finish – for some reason high gloss always looks a little more classy than a matt finish. If a duet of cedar and mahogany is one staple of the acoustic guitar top-and-back world, then spruce and rosewood is almost certainly the other. The AAA Sitka top looks superb and Furch has sensibly employed a transparent pickguard so that the timber's good looks aren't interrupted in any way. The Indian rosewood is that thick chocolate colour, with a strikingly





5. The MC Orange OMC-SR has Indian rosewood back and sides with flamed maple binding

6. A set of Schaller M6 tuners with a 1:18 ratio ensure that tuning is always spot on



On the Blue GC-CM, everything is nicely in balance with a good amount of bass and resonant trebles

straight grain, top and back, offset with flamed maple binding. Visually, it's a stunner. The OMC-SR shares the theme of neck and fingerboard materials with its companion, but the tuners here are Schaller M6 with a ratio of 1:18 to ensure a greater level of tuning accuracy. Apart from that, the rosette is a ring of padauk and the fretboard inlays are a bit more on the flamboyant side. The only thing that remains is to hear what both these guitars sound like.

### Feel & Sounds

Returning to the Blue GC-CM, then, the 45mm nut width feels fingerstyle-friendly, but if that's a touch too fat for you, remember that if you follow Furch's Rainbow route, you can specify the more standard 43mm – or if it's too thin, you can ask for a whopping 48mm.

The neck has what Furch refer to as a shallow V to it and that's exactly what it feels like to us. Sound-wise, everything is nicely in balance with a good amount of bass and resonant trebles. Experimenting with both fingerpicking and chordal strumming approaches, we're happy. The guitar feels good in the hand and sounds good in the room.

Switching to the Orange OMC, as with the finish, it feels like you've stepped up a gear. The trebles have that glassy sheen to them and the sustain on the notes sounds like it's being processed through a classy reverb unit. Despite the thinner body depth, which maxes out at 102mm (four inches) as opposed to the Blue's 114mm (4.48 inches), the basses are superbly controlled with enough snap and punch to satisfy strummers and pickers alike.

Electronically, the two guitars have different LR Baggs systems aboard. The GC-CM has the Element, whereas the OMC has the more upmarket Anthem. Both have side-mounted preamp/tuner combos. Once again, you can opt for soundhole controls if you're making a Rainbow order, but the side-mounted variation offers more EQ options. We found the Element a perfect match for the GC with bags of control over the basses and trebles and we chose a sound we liked with the absolute minimum of fuss.

The OMC's Anthem, benefitting from the integral microphone and the facility to balance piezo with mic via the preamp, has an even more sumptuous array of plugged-in sounds. We could probably have fiddled for days and not actually come across a sound we didn't like.



7

## Verdict

There has been a buzz on the acoustic players' jungle telegraph for years about Furch instruments and it's thoroughly well deserved. Build quality is excellent and the facility to customise an instrument to your own taste is an additional bonus. The Blue GC is a fine guitar that has extremely pleasing acoustic and electric voices, and whereas the Orange OMC is quite a step up in terms of cost, what you're getting is classier refinements all along the line that all add up to a delightful playing experience and a stage sound that any pro would be happy with. If you're not already familiar with Furch acoustics, we would encourage you to seek them out. **G**

7. The OMC-SR is awash with deluxe features including a AAA grade spruce top with a padauk rosette



## FURCH MC BLUE GC-CM

**PRICE:** £1,100  
**ORIGIN:** Czech Republic  
**TYPE:** Grand auditorium cutaway electro-acoustic  
**TOP:** AA Grade western red cedar  
**BACK/SIDES:** AA Grade African mahogany  
**MAX RIM DEPTH:** 114mm (4.48")  
**MAX BODY WIDTH:** 398mm (15.7")  
**NECK:** African mahogany  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 650mm (25.5")  
**TUNERS:** Furch chrome  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Tusq/45mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Ebony  
**FRETS:** 20  
**BRIDGE/SPACING:** Ebony/55mm  
**ELECTRICS:** LR Baggs Stagepro Element  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 1.81/4  
**OPTIONS:** Pickup options include LR Baggs EAS VTC (€208), Stagepro Element (€208), Anthem (soundhole mounted €397), plus Stagepro Anthem (€397). All models available in: dreadnought, dreadnought cutaway, grand auditorium, grand auditorium cutaway, OM, OM cutaway. Gigbag €76; Hiscox case €254  
**RANGE OPTIONS:** The Blue range includes SA (spruce/zebrawood) €1,131; SW (spruce/walnut) €1,181, Blue Plus CM (cedar/mahogany) €1,128, Blue Plus SA (spruce/zebrawood) €1,288, Blue Plus SW (spruce/walnut) €1,338  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** Yes  
**FINISH:** Open-pore



9/10

**PROS** A nice all-rounder with few frills, but this is an excellent playing experience

**CONS:** Gigbag or hard case are extras and not included



## FURCH MC ORANGE OMC-SR

**PRICE:** £2,634 (inc hard case)  
**ORIGIN:** Czech Republic  
**TYPE:** OM cutaway electro-acoustic  
**TOP:** AAA Grade Sitka spruce  
**BACK/SIDES:** AAA Grade Indian rosewood  
**MAX RIM DEPTH:** 102mm (4")  
**MAX BODY WIDTH:** 380mm (15")  
**NECK:** African mahogany  
**SCALE LENGTH:** 650mm (25.5")  
**TUNERS:** Schaller M6  
**NUT/WIDTH:** Tusq/45mm  
**FINGERBOARD:** Ebony  
**FRETS:** 20  
**BRIDGE/SPACING:** Ebony/55mm  
**ELECTRICS:** LR Baggs Anthem  
**WEIGHT (kg/lb):** 1.9/4.18  
**OPTIONS:** Pickup options include (all LR Baggs) EAS VTC (€208), Stagepro Element (€208), Anthem (soundhole mounted €397). Available in: dreadnought, dreadnought cutaway, grand auditorium, grand auditorium cutaway, OM, OM cutaway, OOM, OOM cutaway  
**RANGE OPTIONS:** Orange SW (Sitka spruce & black walnut) from €2,509  
**LEFT-HANDERS:** Yes  
**FINISH:** High Gloss

**Furch Guitars**  
**+420 519 417 285**  
**[www.furchguitars.com](http://www.furchguitars.com)**

8/10

**PROS** A well-built, high-quality instrument with a lot of character and great sound

**CONS** Slightly weighty and highly competitive price point